

From Good Words.

SOME THOUGHTS ON PROSE COMPOSITION.

BY HENRY ROGERS,

Author of "*The Eclipse of Faith*."

If "prose" be, according to the lucid definition which the *Maître de Philosophie* gives to "*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*," "all that is not verse," we need not wonder at the surprise or the rapture with which M. Jourdain found that "he had been talking prose for more than forty years without knowing it." But if by "prose" be meant a "species of literary composition," demanding, no less than poetry, the apt expression of continuous thought and feeling, then he enormously flattered himself in this conclusion.

In truth, the "art of prose composition" is a phrase quite as intelligible as the art of painting or music: or if it be thought that prose seems a more natural use of language, and verse a more artificial, the difference is still only one of degree.

Both are natural, and both are artificial. There are conditions of the human mind in which the outbursts of lyric song, though in one sense artificial, are as natural as the warbling of the nightingale; while it is also true that the most natural eloquence will be none the less natural, but rather the more so, that there has been a designed and skilful application of means to ends. In fact, the words Nature and Art, where the latter means no more than this, are but complements of one another, and can never be opposed.

So far from prose, as a species of literary composition, being so simple an affair as M. Jourdain supposes, it is a somewhat curious fact that in the literature of all nations it has been preceded by verse. Of course it is not meant that there was not plenty of prose like M. Jourdain's extemporaneous specimens, — who asks whether, "if he orders his servant to bring him his slippers, that is prose?" and is happy to find it is. Language was always sufficient no doubt for colloquial purposes, before composition was thought of. Men could always buy and sell, and get gain, and cheat, and wrangle, and rail, and quarrel, and make it up again, without invoking any one of the Sacred Nine.

I have said it is a curious fact, that in the development of literature in general, poetry has preceded prose. Yet poetry under some form or other, in metre or without, would naturally be the elder-born of genius; for in the history of a community, not less than in that of the individual, the imagination is developed earlier than the reason. Hence in part (though also from the necessities of a scanty vocabulary) the language of barbarous nations generally abounds in bold metaphor; it has even been observed that their very laws — what will not imagination do? — are tintured by it. Very beautiful certainly are those expressions in the Scandinavian laws which forbid trespass on the open and unguarded field, "inasmuch as the field hath the hedge for its wall, and heaven for its roof;" or as expressed in another law against trespassers, "because it is under God's lock."

But it is also true that the poetry, with which all literature commences, is not poetry in substance merely, but in form; it is metrical. It is as if young Fancy, revelling in happy sensation and stimulated by natural passion, broke out like the birds into spontaneous melody; or that, to use the language of Milton, she

"Fed on thoughts which voluntary moved
Harmonious numbers."

For this priority of verse to prose, many other reasons might be assigned, if this were the place for it. In the infancy of civilization, and especially in the absence, not merely of the printing-press, but of any generally understood methods of fixing and transmitting thought, composition would be a rarity and a luxury; copies (even if letters were known) would be few, and few could read them; it must, therefore, be in such a form as would aid memory and make transmission possible; and verse is the best expedient that can be devised for attaining both these objects. Again: as poetry would be in some form or other the earliest species of composition for the reasons already assigned, and as the end of poetry considered as a species of composition is *delight*, it was natural to combine upon it all the elements of delight; to invest it with every possible attraction; and amongst these must be reck-

oned a metrical arrangement. This also more easily admitted the superadded charm of Music.

The degree of distinction between poetry and prose, as two species of *composition*, has varied in different ages and amongst different nations, though it has of course always been great.

If we compare the interval between them as exemplified respectively in classical and modern literature, it would seem, contrary at first sight to obvious fact, as if the chasm was yet wider amongst the ancients than with us;—seemingly contrary to fact, because our poets generally submit to *one* restraint, and that a very onerous one, of which the Ancients knew nothing,—that is, *rhyme*. Notwithstanding, either from the notions they entertained of the very different qualifications of mind which the two severally required, or from the refined laws which their taste imposed on verse, or from both, it would seem that the two species of compositions were thought even wider apart than with us. And this would appear to be confirmed by a curious circumstance, which has perhaps hardly received sufficient attention from the literary historian, that there is hardly a name in Greek or Roman literature which has in any considerable degree distinguished itself in both forms of composition; as if the Ancients had either formed the conclusion that the two were so totally distinct that each required a genius exclusively adapted to it, or that the difficulties of obtaining the mastery of both were so great, that he who should attempt it must content himself with less than the fame he might promise himself by undivided devotion to either alone. If Cicero wrote a few verses, they assuredly added nothing to his reputation, and one luckless jingling line, provokingly immortalized in the satire of Juvenal, has been a standing joke against him in all ages.* Though Plato's writings overflow with the *essence* of poetry, and though his earliest compositions were poetical even in form, history does not record that he wrote anything in that way (except perhaps a single epigram) which satisfied his contemporaries, and certainly *does* record that he did not satisfy himself. In general the prose writers and the poets of Antiquity seem to have been as distinct as the poets and the painters, and for the most part punctiliously avoided invading each other's province.

* Tacitus (or the author, whoever he be, of the treatise "De Oratoribus"), while speaking with deserved contempt of Cicero's poetic efforts, slyly says that Cæsar also had composed verses, but that he had had better luck, inasmuch as few people had ever seen them!

Amongst the moderns the case is altered. We have numerous examples of men who have almost equally distinguished themselves both in prose and verse. Some diminution of power there may be—we may almost say, except in the rarest cases, must be—in such feats, so long as it remains true that man will do *that* best which he makes his single and paramount object; as long as it is true that he cannot achieve many things so well as he can achieve one. But it must be confessed, in the present case, that many instances may be specified wherein that diminution of power is so slight as to be scarcely appreciable.

The contrast between ancient and modern literature in this respect is indeed partly accounted for by the fact that, for those capacities and tendencies of our nature which most appropriately find their expression in poetry, we have whole classes of imaginative compositions unknown to the ancients—as, for example, the prose-romance and novel—and in which therefore it is not so wonderful that a poet, if he attempts them, should excel. Still the instances of authors who have written poetry of a high order, and at the same time earned themselves much fame in departments of prose literature less allied to poetry than those I have just specified, are sufficiently numerous to show us that the Greeks and Romans entertained very different notions on the subject from our own; different, either because the two species of composition—unlike as they always are—were separated by a still wider interval then than now; or because precedent and custom had restricted the ancient writers to the one or the other; or because they more rigidly applied the principle of the "division of labour," for the purpose of securing the most perfect results in every branch of intellectual effort.

Some critics have made it a question whether it is possible for a poet to write good prose at all;—and one very able one, who does not go quite this length, asks, "Whence, then, the fact that few great poets have succeeded as prose writers?" Yet a glance at the history of modern literature would suggest more than a doubt as to whether this can be said to be a *fact*. It is true that we may here and there see a mind, not merely of so poetical a temperament in general, but so exclusively adapted to some special branch of the art,—the lyrical, for example,—that it cannot comply gracefully with the severe requirements of prose; or one whose imagination is so fertile or so sublime that poetry

forms at all events the most appropriate vehicle of its conceptions; or one so accustomed to write in metre, that even its ordinary prose style partakes of a sort of measured movement and cadence,—just as we may see persons so accustomed to a certain movement of body, that even in their ordinary gait they may be said rather to dance than to walk. But these are exceptions to the rule. In general, the most splendid powers of invention and imagery may not only find ample scope in the more refined or elevated species of imaginative prose-composition, but are so imperatively required there in order to attain the highest excellence, that if there be but conjoined with them that strong sense, which the great Roman critic represents as the basis of all good writing, the poet need not be afraid that he shall not “succeed as a prose-writer.”

At all events, it is futile to speculate in the face of facts. The prose of Cowley and of Dryden—that of the one better than his poetry, that of the other equal to it; the prose of Milton, which though it has palpable defects, yet has also transcendent excellences; the prose of Cowper and of Gray, whose letters justly rank amongst the finest specimens of composition in the whole compass of English literature; the prose of Southey, Walter Scott, and Byron, all of whom have written prose admirably; Goethe Schiller, Herder, and others in Germany,—can hardly leave a doubt that poetry and prose may flow from the same pen; and that though it may be true that there is usually some one thing which genius will do better than any other, and will do that one thing all the better for doing that alone, yet that it is not impossible that it may excel in two.

While it may be doubted whether there are not structural differences of mind which would in some cases limit a great genius to either the one or the other, these examples are surely sufficient to show that it is not impossible to excel in both; and that there must have been other reasons for that sheer line of demarcation which the ancients made between them. Michaelis, indeed, in one of his acute notes on “Lowth’s Lectures on Hebrew Poetry,” doubts whether it is possible for a truly great poet ever to become a truly great orator, or *vice versâ*. He who reads the speech which Shakspeare puts into Mark Antony’s mouth over the dead body of Cæsar may perhaps be disposed to doubt, with Whately, whether he who was the greatest of dramatists might not also have proved, under other circum-

stances, the greatest of orators; while those who are familiarly acquainted with the prose writings of Milton need not be told that he possessed that great element of the highest style of oratory which is called by the Greeks *deinotês*, but for which our language wants a name,—consisting of intellect glowing and molten in passion. On the other hand, it is impossible to read Jeremy Taylor without feeling that he might have been a great poet. To borrow an expression I have used elsewhere, he speaks the language of poetry by a sort of necessity of his nature. He resembles those full clouds of spring which shake out their fertilizing showers with every breath of wind that stirs them; the slightest movement of his mind seems enough to detach the images from his ever-teeming fancy. No matter what his subject, he is sure to adorn it. Even over the most bleak and wintry wastes of casuistry or metaphysical theology, he passes like the very spirit of the spring, and all that is rich and beautiful in foliage and flower puts forth at his bidding.

Nature everywhere exhibits exhaustless variety in her products; and it is not the least singular example of this that we find endless diversities of style and manner amongst prose writers, though it requires a keen analytic skill always to determine in what the difference consists. Not only are there the distinctions of schools: no two individuals, of any considerable originality, can be found in whose styles there is not as distinct a character as in their handwritings. It seems, at first sight, marvellous. Though the points in which any two great prose-writers resemble one another must be unspeakably more numerous and important than those in which they differ; though, from the writings of either, the critic can extract exemplifications of all the laws of his art,—yet there are never two indistinguishably alike. It is with minds as with faces; obvious in their general resemblance, the diversities by which one is discriminated from another are as obvious. Such is the miracle which Nature has everywhere achieved—that of reconciling essential unity with infinite variety. Minute original diversities of mind, whatever the general similarity,—minute differences of education, though its general system may be the same,—and the circumstances of external life, which are never the same, give to the fruits of every mind a tinct of the soil and the clime which produced them. There are great resemblances between certain kinds of handwriting; family resemblances, and resemblances which result from unconscious imi-

tation; but they are all distinguishably different, and are in effect as unlike as they are alike. The diversities referred to are indeed somewhat less obvious in prose than in poetry; and sometimes, in purely didactic composition, require a practised ear and much analytic skill to detect and express them. Sometimes they cannot be expressed—so minute and subtle are they; but, where the compositions have any signal merit, they exist, and are felt, even if too refined to admit of being characterized in language. It is much the same as in music, where every one feels and acknowledges the different style of composition in Handel, Haydn, and Mozart, though not one in a thousand could specify those differences, or give expression to them in language. Yet the difference is *felt* so strongly that an accomplished musician will scarcely mistake their compositions, even on a first hearing. Nor is the difference between their strains greater than that between the prose of Milton and that of Johnson, between the prose of Burke and that of Addison; and the critic who hears them will be as little liable to mistake in referring their compositions to their proper authors.

A novice is apt to suppose that the interval between different compositions in prose is less wide than it really is; he is apt to think that "plain prose," as he calls it, is much alike in all cases; standing always on much the same level; that it may be considered a sort of *any-how* mode of expressing our thoughts, or that it is simply a mode of expression which is *not* metrical. Many readers are little aware what a highly complex and artificial thing the best prose is, after all. They little dream of the toil and thought usually expended on composition before it assumes even an approximation to the ideal of the author, or before the artist will permit a stranger to enter his studio. Apt thoughts will usually—that is, in a great number of cases—suggest apt words; but how often, on reconsideration, are those words exchanged for words which are found to be still more apt; how many changes of construction have been submitted to, in order to secure greater harmony or greater compactness; how many blottings and interlineations and substitutions have intervened between the first rough copy and the last printer's revise; how many corrections have been made in successive transcripts and successive proofs; how long has been the chase after a fugitive synonym; how have the cells of memory been ransacked and their contents tumbled out for a forgotten word! There is scarcely any limit to

which a correct ear and a delicate taste, if time be given, cannot carry improvement; scarcely any point at which an author will acknowledge that he can suggest no more. Johnson, when he had elaborately revised his early and often hasty papers in the "Rambler,"—and it must be acknowledged that they stood in need of it,—said to a lady who asked whether he could *now* improve any of them, "Yes, madam, I could make even the best of them still better." Burke, it is said, used to cover his manuscript with interlineations and alterations; and of some parts of his celebrated "Reflections" saw half-a-dozen proofs before he could satisfy himself. And he might have seen as many more before he failed to detect anything which he wished unsaid, or to suggest something he would still like to say. Pascal, it is said, employed not less than twenty days on the perfecting and revisal of some of his immortal "Provincial Letters;" justifying the language of his editor, M. Faugère, that revision with him was, as it were, a "second creation."

The celebrated Junius was almost as fastidious, and Robert Hall gave as one reason for his writing so little, that he could so rarely approach the realization of his own ideal of perfection in style. Few things are more suggestive or instructive to a young writer than the inspection of *fac-similes* of the blotted and interlined originals of some of the celebrated passages of the greatest masters of style.

While it is true that prose is not metrical,—nay, while one of its very excellences consists in the entire absence of anything that shall even suggest the thought of it, yet it has its characteristic music no less than poetry itself; not that, indeed, of the lyre or the lute—of measured cadence and artificial harmony; but the wild and free, yet ever-pleasant and ever-varied, music of nature; of whispering winds or rolling floods; the pathetic wail or passionate gusts of the Æolian harp; such music as is heard by the mountain streams or in the leafy woods of summer. Not less than poetry, it has its sweet and equable or its impetuous and rapid flow; its full and majestic harmonies; its abrupt transitions; its impressive pauses; its graceful, though not regularly recurring, cadences.

Such are the abstract capabilities of prose, though they are not always exhibited or often demanded from it. In general there can be no doubt that we demand in poetry a more exact attention to harmony of expression and a more elaborate and exquisite adaptation of the words to the thoughts.

And, in fact, the connection between them is more indissoluble. Alter the words or the arrangement ever so little, and half the charm of a fine stanza is gone. It is true that this is partially the case with harmonious prose; but it is not the case to anything like the same extent, or in half so many instances. The poet's thoughts — to employ an expression of Milton's descriptive of the union between music and poetry — are

"Married to immortal verse."

It is indeed a sacred, an indissoluble union. The strain of the poet may be compared with the strain of the musician, which cannot exist apart from the instrument which awakes it. The lay of the minstrel is spoilt if but a chord of the lyre be broken.

Though the connection between thought and expression is not so close in prose as in poetry, it is still, in prose of a high order, most intimate; and the contrast between the best and the feeblest prose-compositions may be aptly illustrated by the image which Campbell, in his *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, has employed, to show the distinction between compositions in the classical languages and in our own. Speaking of the want of inflections in English, which forbids that varied collocation of words allowed in the languages of Greece and Rome, and also necessitates that abundant employment of particles — for example, of prepositions and conjunctions, which so often loads our style, he remarks, "Our modern languages may be compared to the art of carpentry in its rudest state, when the union of the materials employed by the artisan could be effected only by the help of those external and coarse implements, pins, nails, and cramps. The ancient languages resemble the same art in its most improved state, after the invention of dovetail joints, grooves, and mortises; all the principal junctions being effected by forming properly the extremities or terminations of the pieces to be joined." The similitude is certainly as apt when applied to examples of the best and worst prose in the same language.

In the instructive and amusing papers inserted in these pages, on "The Queen's English," we were warned of the danger, in these days of universal authorship and extensive international communication, of corrupting our noble language by incautiously taking up, and suffering to obtain currency (after which there is no effectual appeal), the impurities of diction, construction, and idiom, which are extensively afloat in the literature of the day.

The same theme was instructively dilated

upon in an admirable article in the *Edinburgh Review*, July, 1864. Perhaps it may not be superfluous to remind the young writer, that if he would attain more than correctness, or even a fluent facility, and impress upon his compositions that individuality without which they cannot live, he must remember that prose may be possessed of nearly as various excellence as poetry; and as much requires sedulous self-culture, profound meditation of the subject-matter, familiar acquaintance with the best models (models sufficiently numerous and varied, to prevent that mannerism which results from unconscious imitation of one), and that "limæ labor," that patient revision, which is the condition of all excellence, literary or otherwise. Perhaps, considering the immense mass of written matter which is every day given to the world, (and annually covering, if it were spread out, *horribile dictu!* thousands of acres of printed thought,) we ought, rather to wonder that so much rises above mediocrity, than that so much falls below it.

The periodic press has been from time immemorial the arena in which the young literary athlete has trained himself for more important efforts. In it, most of our principal writers have exercised their young strength, and developed their sinew and muscle. To him, however, who wishes the highest development of which his nature is susceptible, there are disadvantages as well as advantages in this sort of school. It too often encourages contentment with a fatal facility; the hurry in which most articles must be composed encourages faults of negligence, and leaves no leisure to correct them; and too often the seductive "anonymous" allows a man to let that pass which he would not suffer to go under his own name.

Hence, as well as for other reasons, it is that we may often read articles exhibiting much talent, much learning, and much facility, on which there is yet so little individuality impressed, that we may read fifty of them, and feel that they might all have been written by the same hand. It is the tendency of a high civilization (say some) to obliterate the distinctions between different minds, and to reduce them to the same level. This theory may, I think, be doubted, or at least is only very partially true; and one is as little willing to believe it true in literature as anywhere. But it can be confuted, in this case, only by the strenuous efforts of every writer to impress upon his work the indelible marks of his own thought, and to let the fruits of his mind bear traces of the soil which produced them.

CHAPTER X.

A CRISIS.

MRS. KIRKPATRICK had been reading aloud till Lady Cumnor fell asleep; the book rested on her knee, just kept from falling by her hold. She was looking out of the window, not seeing the trees in the park, nor the glimpses of the hills beyond, but thinking how pleasant it would be to have a husband once more; — some one who would work while she sate at her elegant ease in a prettily-furnished drawing-room; and she was rapidly investing this imaginary bread-winner with the form and features of the country surgeon, when there was a slight tap at the door, and, almost before she could rise the object of her thoughts came in. She felt herself blush, and she was not displeased at the consciousness. She advanced to meet him, making a sign towards her sleeping ladyship.

"Very good," said he in a low voice, casting a professional eye on the slumbering figure; "can I speak to you for a minute or two in the library?"

"Is he going to offer?" thought she, with a sudden palpitation, and a conviction of her willingness to accept a man whom an hour before she simply looked upon as one of the category of unmarried men to whom matrimony was possible.

He was only going to make one or two medical inquiries; she found that out very speedily, and considered the conversation as rather flat to her, though it might be instructive to him. She was not aware that he finally made up his mind to propose, during the time that she was speaking — answering his questions in many words, but he was accustomed to winnow the chaff from the corn; and her voice was so soft, her accent so pleasant, that it struck him as particularly agreeable after the broad country accent he was perpetually hearing. Then the harmonious colours of her dress, and her slow and graceful movements, had something of the same soothing effect upon his nerves that a cat's purring has upon some people's. He began to think that he should be fortunate if he could win her, for his own sake. Yesterday he had looked upon her more as a possible stepmother for Molly; to-day he thought more of her as a wife for himself. The remembrance of Lord Cumnor's letter gave her a very becoming consciousness; she wished to attract, and hoped that she was succeeding. Still they only talked of the countess's state for some time; then a lucky shower came on. Mr. Gibson did not care

a jot for rain, but just now it gave him an excuse for lingering.

"It is very stormy weather," said he.

"Yes, very. My daughter writes me word, that for two days last week the packet could not sail from Boulogne."

"Miss Kirkpatrick is at Boulogne, is she?"

"Yes, poor girl; she is at school there, trying to perfect herself in the French language. But, Mr. Gibson, you must not call her Miss Kirkpatrick. Cynthia remembers you with so much — affection, I may say. She was your little patient when she had measles here four years ago, you know. Pray call her Cynthia; she would be quite hurt at such a formal name as Miss Kirkpatrick from you."

"Cynthia seems to me such an out-of-the-way name, only fit for poetry, not for daily use."

"It is mine," said Mrs. Kirkpatrick in a plaintive tone of reproach. "I was christened Hyacinth, and her poor father would have her called after me. I am sorry you don't like it."

Mr. Gibson did not know what to say. He was not quite prepared to plunge into the directly personal style. While he was hesitating, she went on —

"Hyacinth Clare! Once upon a time I was quite proud of my pretty name; and other people thought it pretty, too."

"I've no doubt" — Mr. Gibson began; and then stopped.

"Perhaps I did wrong in yielding to his wish, to have her called by such a romantic name. It may excite prejudice against her in some people; and, poor child! she will have enough to struggle with. A young daughter is a great charge, Mr. Gibson, especially when there is only one parent to look after her."

"You are quite right," said he, recalled to the remembrance of Molly; "though I should have thought that a girl who is so fortunate as to have a mother could not feel the loss of her father so acutely as one who is motherless must suffer from her deprivation."

"You are thinking of your own daughter. It was careless of me to say what I did. Dear child! how well I remember her sweet little face as she lay sleeping on my bed! I suppose she is nearly grown up now. She must be near my Cynthia's age. How I should like to see her!"

"I hope you will. I should like you to see her. I should like you to love my poor little Molly, — to love her as your own" —

He swallowed down something that rose in his throat, and was nearly choking him.

"Is he going to offer? Is he?" she wondered; and she began to tremble in the suspense before he next spoke.

"Could you love her as your daughter? Will you try? Will you give me the right of introducing you to her as her future mother; as my wife?"

There! he had done it — whether it was wise or foolish — he had done it; but he was aware that the question as to its wisdom came into his mind the instant that the words were said past recall.

She hid her face in her hands.

"Oh! Mr. Gibson," she said; and then, a little to his surprise, and a great deal to her own, she burst into hysterical tears: it was such a wonderful relief to feel that she need not struggle any more for a livelihood.

"My dear — my dearest," said he, trying to soothe her with word and caress; but, just at the moment, uncertain what name he ought to use. After her sobbing had abated a little, she said herself, as if understanding his difficulty, —

"Call me Hyacinth — your own Hyacinth. I can't bear 'Clare,' it does so remind me of being a governess, and those days are all past now."

"Yes; but surely no one can have been more valued, more beloved, than you have been in this family at least."

"Oh, yes! they have been very good. But still one has always had to remember one's position."

"We ought to tell Lady Cumnor," said he, thinking, perhaps, more of the various duties which lay before him, in consequence of the step he had just taken, than of what his future bride was saying.

"You'll tell her, won't you?" said she, looking up in his face with beseeching eyes. "I always like other people to tell her things, and then I can see how she takes them."

"Certainly! I will do whatever you wish. Shall we go and see if she is awake now?"

"No! I think not. I had better prepare her. You will come to-morrow, won't you? and you will tell her then."

"Yes; that will be best. I ought to tell Molly first. She has the right to know. I do hope you and she will love each other dearly."

"Oh, yes! I'm sure we shall. Then you'll come to-morrow and tell Lady Cumnor? And I'll prepare her."

"I don't see what preparation is necessary; but you know best, my dear. When

can we arrange for you and Molly to meet?"

Just then a servant came in, and the pair started apart.

"Her ladyship is awake, and wishes to see Mr. Gibson."

They both followed the man upstairs; Mrs. Kirkpatrick trying hard to look as if nothing had happened, for she particularly wished "to prepare" Lady Cumnor; that is to say, to give her version of Mr. Gibson's extreme urgency, and her own coy unwillingness.

But Lady Cumnor had observant eyes in sickness as well as in health. She had gone to sleep with the recollection of the passage in her husband's letter full in her mind, and, perhaps, it gave a direction to her wakening ideas.

"I'm glad you're not gone, Mr. Gibson. I wanted to tell you — what's the matter with you both? What have you been saying to Clare? I'm sure something has happened."

There was nothing for it, in Mr. Gibson's opinion, but to make a clean breast of it, and tell her ladyship all. He turned round, and took hold of Mrs. Kirkpatrick's hand, and said out straight, "I have been asking Mrs. Kirkpatrick to be my wife, and to be a mother to my child; and she has consented. I hardly know how to thank her enough in words."

"Umph! I don't see any objection. I dare say you'll be very happy. I'm very glad of it! Here! shake hands with me, both of you." Then laughing a little, she added, "It does not seem to me that any exertion has been required on my part."

Mr. Gibson looked perplexed at these words. Mrs. Kirkpatrick reddened.

"Did she not tell you? Oh, then, I must. It's too good a joke to be lost, especially as everything has ended so well. When Lord Cumnor's letter came this morning — this very morning, I gave it to Clare to read aloud to me, and I saw she suddenly came to a full stop, where no full stop could be, and I thought it was something about Agnes; so I took the letter and read — stay! I'll read the sentence to you. Where's the letter, Clare? Oh! don't trouble yourself; here it is. 'How are Clare and Gibson getting on? You despised my advice to help on that affair, but I really think a little match-making would be a very pleasant amusement, now that you are shut up in the house; and I cannot conceive any marriage more suitable.' You see, you have my Lord's full approbation. But I must write, and tell him you

have managed your own affairs without any interference of mine. Now we'll just have a little medical talk, Mr. Gibson, and then you and Clare shall finish your *tête-à-tête*."

They were neither of them quite as desirous of further conversation together as they had been before the passage out of Lord Cumnor's letter had been read aloud. Mr. Gibson tried not to think about it, for he was aware that, if he dwelt upon it, he might get to fancy all sorts of things as to the conversation which had ended in his offer. But Lady Cumnor was imperious now, as always.

"Come, no nonsense. I always made my girls go and have *tête-à-têtes* with the men who were to be their husbands, whether they would or no: there's a great deal to be talked over before every marriage, and you two are certainly old enough to be above affectation. Go away with you."

So there was nothing for it but for them to return to the library; Mrs. Kirkpatrick pouting a little, and Mr. Gibson feeling more like his own cool, sarcastic self, by many degrees, than he had done when last in that room.

She began, half crying,—

"I cannot tell what poor Kirkpatrick would say if he knew what I have done. He did so dislike the notion of second marriages, poor fellow."

"Let us hope that he does not know, then; or that, if he does know, he is wiser—I mean, that he sees how second marriages may be most desirable and expedient in some cases."

Altogether, this second *tête-à-tête*, done to command, was not so satisfactory as the first; and Mr. Gibson was quite alive to the necessity of proceeding on his round to see his patients before very much time had elapsed.

"We shall shake down into uniformity before long, I've no doubt," said he to himself as he rode away. "It's hardly to be expected that our thoughts should run in the same groove all at once. Nor should I like it," he added. "It would be very flat and stagnant to have only an echo of one's own opinions from one's wife. Heigho! I must tell Molly about it: dear little woman, I wonder how she'll take it! It's done, in a great measure, for her good." And then he lost himself in recapitulating Mrs. Kirkpatrick's good qualities, and the advantages to be gained to his daughter from the step he had just taken.

It was too late to go round by Hamley that afternoon. The Towers and the Towers' round lay just in the opposite direction

to Hamley. So it was the next morning before Mr. Gibson arrived at the hall, timing his visit as well as he could so as to have half-an-hour's private talk with Molly before Mrs. Hamley came down into the drawing-room. He thought that his daughter would require sympathy after receiving the intelligence he had to communicate; and he knew there was no one more fit to give it than Mrs. Hamley.

It was a brilliantly hot summer's morning; men in their shirt-sleeves were in the fields getting in the early harvest of oats; as Mr. Gibson rode slowly along, he could see them over the tall hedge-rows, and even hear the soothing measured sound of the fall of the long swathes as they were mown. The labourers seemed too hot to talk; the dog, guarding their coats and cans, lay panting loudly on the other side of the elm, under which Mr. Gibson stopped for an instant to survey the scene, and gain a little delay before the interview that he wished was well over. In another minute he had snapped at himself for his weakness, and put spurs to his horse. He came up to the hall at a good sharp trot; it was earlier than the usual time of his visits, and no one was expecting him; all the stable-men were in the fields, but that signified little to Mr. Gibson; he walked his horse about for five minutes or so before taking him into the stable, and loosened his girths, examining him with perhaps unnecessary exactitude. He went into the house by a private door, and made his way into the drawing-room, half expecting, however, that Molly would be in the garden. She had been there, but it was too hot and dazzling now for her to remain out of doors, and she had come in by the open window of the drawing-room. Oppressed with the heat, she had fallen asleep in an easy-chair, her bonnet and open book upon her knee, one arm hanging listlessly down. She looked very soft, and young, and childlike; and a gush of love sprang into her father's heart as he gazed at her.

"Molly!" said he, gently, taking the little brown hand that was hanging down, and holding it in his own. "Molly!"

She opened her eyes, that for one moment had no recognition in them. Then the light came brilliantly into them, and she sprang up, and threw her arms round his neck, exclaiming,—

"Oh, papa, my dear, dear papa! What made you come while I was asleep? I lose the pleasure of watching for you."

Mr. Gibson turned a little paler than he had been before. He still held her hand,

and drew her to a seat by him on a sofa, without speaking. There was no need; she was chattering away.

"I was up so early! It is so charming to be out here in the fresh morning air. I think that made me sleepy. But isn't it a gloriously hot day? I wonder if the Italian skies they talk about can be bluer than that—that little bit you see just between the oaks—there!"

She pulled her hand away, and used both it and the other to turn her father's head, so that he should exactly see the very bit she meant. She was rather struck by his unusual silence.

"Have you heard from Miss Eyre, papa? How are they all? And this fever that is about? Do you know, papa, I don't think you are looking well? You want me at home to take care of you. How soon may I come home?"

"Don't I look well? That must be all your fancy, goosey. I feel uncommonly well; and I ought to look well, for—I have a piece of news for you, little woman." (He felt that he was doing his business very awkwardly, but he was determined to plunge on.) "Can you guess it?"

"How should I?" said she; but her tone was changed, and she was evidently uneasy, as with the presage of an instinct.

"Why, you see, my love," said he, again taking her hand, "that you are in a very awkward position—a girl growing up in such a family as mine—young men—which was a piece of confounded stupidity on my part. And I am obliged to be away so much."

"But there is Miss Eyre," said she, sick with the strengthening indefinite presage of what was to come. "Dear Miss Eyre, I want nothing but her and you."

"Still there are times like the present when Miss Eyre cannot be with you; her home is not with us; she has other duties. I've been in great perplexity for some time; but at last I've taken a step which will, I hope, make us both happier."

"You're going to be married again," said she, helping him out, with a quiet dry voice, and gently drawing her hand out of his.

"Yes. To Mrs. Kirkpatrick—you remember her! They call her Clare at the Towers. You recollect how kind she was to you that day you were left there?"

She did not answer. She could not tell what words to use. She was afraid of saying anything, lest the passion of anger, dislike, indignation—whatever it was that was boiling up in her breast—should find vent in cries and screams, or worse, in raging

words that could never be forgotten. It was as if the piece of solid ground on which she stood had broken from the shore, and she was drifting out to the infinite sea alone.

Mr. Gibson saw that her silence was unnatural, and half guessed at the cause of it. But he knew that she must have time to reconcile herself to the idea, and still believed that it would be for her eventual happiness. He had, besides, the relief of feeling that the secret was told, the confidence made, which he had been dreading for the last twenty-four hours. He went on recapitulating all the advantages of the marriage; he knew them off by heart now.

"She's a very suitable age for me. I don't know how old she is exactly, but she must be nearly forty. I shouldn't have wished to marry any one younger. She's highly respected by Lord and Lady Cumnor and their family, which is of itself a character. She has very agreeable and polished manners—of course, from the circles she has been thrown into—and you and I, goosey, are apt to be a little brusque, or so; we must brush up our manners now."

No remark from her on this little bit of playfulness. He went on—

"She has been accustomed to housekeeping—economical housekeeping, too—for of late years she has had a school at Ashcombe, and has had, of course, to arrange all things for a large family. And last, but not least, she has a daughter—about your age, Molly—who, of course, will come and live with us, and be a nice companion—a sister—for you."

Still she was silent. At length she said,—

"So I was sent out of the house that all this might be quietly arranged in my absence?"

Out of the bitterness of her heart she spoke, but she was roused out of her assumed impassiveness by the effect produced. Her father started up, and quickly left the room, saying something to himself—what, she could not hear, though she ran after him, followed him through dark stone passages into the glare of the stable-yard, into the stables—

"Oh, papa, papa—I'm not myself—I don't know what to say about this hateful—this detestable!"

He led his horse out. She did not know if he heard her word. Just as he mounted, he turned round upon her with a gray grim face—

"I think it's better for both of us, for me to go away now. We may say things difficult to forget. We are both much agitated. By to-morrow we shall be more composed

you will have thought it over, and have seen that the principal — one great motive, I mean — was your good. You may tell Mrs. Hamley — I meant to have told her myself, I will come again to-morrow. Good-by, Molly."

For many minutes after he had ridden away — long after the sound of his horse's hoofs on the round stones of the paved lane, beyond the home-meadows, had died away — Molly stood there, shading her eyes, and looking at the empty space of air in which his form had last appeared. Her very breath seemed suspended; only, two or three times, after long intervals she drew a miserable sigh, which was caught up into a sob. She turned away at last, but could not go into the house, could not tell Mrs. Hamley, could not forget how her father had looked and spoken — and left her.

She went out by a side-door — it was the way by which the gardeners passed when they took the manure into the garden — and the walk to which it led was concealed from sight as much as possible by shrubs and evergreens and over-arching trees. No one would know what became of her, and, with the ingratitude of misery she added to herself, no one would care. Mrs. Hamley had her own husband, her own children, her close home interests — she was very good and kind, but there was a bitter grief in Molly's heart, with which the stranger could not intermeddle. She went quickly on to the bourn which she had fixed for herself — a seat almost surrounded by the drooping leaves of a weeping-ash — a seat on the long broad terrace walk on the other side of the wood that overlooked the pleasant slope of the meadows beyond; the walk had probably been made to command this sunny, peaceful landscape, with trees, and a church spire, two or three red-tiled roofs of old cottages, and a purple bit of rising ground in the distance; and at some previous date, when there might have been a large family of Hamleys residing at the hall, ladies in hoops, and gentlemen in bag-wigs with swords by their sides, might have filled up the breadth of the terrace, as they sauntered, smiling, along. But no one ever cared to saunter there now. It was a deserted walk. The squire or his sons might cross it in passing to a little gate that led to the meadow beyond; but no one loitered there. Molly almost thought that no one knew of the hidden seat under the ash-tree but herself; for there were not more gardeners employed upon the grounds than were necessary to keep the kitchen-gardens and such of the ornamental part as was frequented by

the family, or in sight of the house, in good order.

When she had once got to the seat she broke out with suppressed passion of grief; she did not care to analyze the sources of her tears and sobs — her father was going to be married again — her father was angry with her; she had done very wrong — he had gone away displeased; she had lost his love, he was going to be married — away from her — away from his child — his little daughter — forgetting her own dear, dear mother. So she thought in a tumultuous kind of way, sobbing till she was wearied out, and had to gain strength by being quiet for a time, to break forth into her passion of tears afresh. She had cast herself on the ground — that natural throne for violent sorrow — and leant up against the old moss-grown seat; sometimes burying her face in her hands; sometimes clasping them together, as if by the tight painful grasp of her fingers she could deaden mental suffering.

She did not see Roger Hamley returning from the meadows, nor hear the click of the little white gate. He had been out dredging in ponds and ditches, and had his wet sling-net, with its imprisoned treasures of nastiness, over his shoulder. He was coming home to lunch, having always a fine mid-day appetite, though he pretended to despise the meal in theory. But he knew that his mother liked his companionship then; she depended much upon her luncheon, and was seldom downstairs and visible to her family much before the time. So he overcame his theory, for the sake of his mother, and had his reward in the hearty relish with which he kept her company in eating.

He did not see Molly as he crossed the terrace-walk on his way homewards. He had gone about twenty yards on the small wood-path at right angles to the terrace, when, looking among the grass and wild plants under the trees, he spied out one which was rare, one which he had been long wishing to find in flower, and saw it at last with those bright keen eyes of his. Down went his net, skilfully twisted so as to retain its contents, while it lay amid the herbage, and he himself went with light and well-planted footsteps in search of the treasure. He was so great a lover of nature, that, without any thought, but habitually, he always avoided treading unnecessarily on any plant; who knew what long-sought growth or insect might develop itself in what now appeared but insignificant?

His steps led him in the direction of the ash-tree seat, much less screened from ob-

servation on this side than on the terrace. He stopped; he saw a light-coloured dress on the ground—somebody half-lying on the seat, so still just then, he wondered if the person, whoever it was, had fallen ill or fainted. He paused to watch. In a minute or two the sobs broke out again—the words. It was Miss Gibson crying out in a broken voice,—

"Oh, papa, papa! if you would but come back!

For a minute or two he thought it would be kinder to leave her believing herself unobserved; he had even made a retrograde step or two, on tip-toe; but then he heard the miserable sobbing again. It was farther than his mother could walk, or else, be the sorrow what it would, she was the natural comforter of this girl, her visitor. However, whether it was right or wrong, delicate or obtrusive, when he heard the sad voice talking again, in such tones of uncomfortable, lonely misery, he turned back, and went to the green tent under the ash-tree. She started up when he came thus close to her; she tried to check her sobs, and instinctively smoothed her wet tangled hair back with her hands.

He looked upon her with grave, kind sympathy, but he did not know exactly what to say.

"Is it lunch-time?" said she, trying to believe that he did not see the traces of her tears and the disturbance of her features—that he had not seen her lying, sobbing her heart out there.

"I don't know. I was going home to lunch. But—you must let me say it—I couldn't go on when I saw your distress. Has anything happened?—anything in which I can help you, I mean; for, of course, I've no right to make the inquiry, if it is any private sorrow, in which I can be of no use."

She had exhausted herself so much with crying, that she felt as if she could neither stand nor walk just yet. She sate down on the seat, and sighed, and turned so pale, he thought she was going to faint.

"Wait a moment," said he, quite unnecessarily, for she could not have stirred; and he was off like a shot to some spring of water that he knew of in the wood, and in a minute or two he returned with careful steps, bringing a little in a broad green leaf, turned into an impromptu cup. Little as it was, it did her good.

"Thank you!" she said: "I can walk back now, in a short time. Don't stop."

"You must let me," said he: "my mother

wouldn't like me to leave you to come home alone, while you are so faint."

So they remained in silence for a little while; he, breaking off and examining one or two abnormal leaves of the ash-tree, partly from the custom of his nature, partly to give her time to recover.

"Papa is going to be married again," said she, at length.

She could not have said why she told him this; an instant before she spoke, she had no intention of doing so. He dropped the leaf he held in his hand, turned round, and looked at her. Her poor wistful eyes were filling with tears as they met his, with a dumb appeal for sympathy. Her look was much more eloquent than her words. There was a momentary pause before he replied, and then it was more because he felt that he must say something than that he was in any doubt as to the answer to the question he asked.

"You are sorry for it?"

She did not take her eyes away from his, as her quivering lips formed the word "Yes," though her voice made no sound. He was silent again now; looking on the ground, kicking softly at a loose pebble with his foot. His thoughts did not come readily to the surface in the shape of words; nor was he apt at giving comfort till he saw his way clear to the real source from which consolation must come. At last he spoke, —almost as if he was reasoning out the matter with himself.

"It seems as if there might be cases where—setting the question of love entirely on one side—it must be almost a duty to find some one to be a substitute for the mother. . . . I can believe," said he, in a different tone of voice, and looking at Molly afresh, "that this step may be greatly for your father's happiness—it may relieve him from many cares, and may give him a pleasant companion."

"He had me. You don't know what we were to each other—at least what he was to me," she added, humbly.

"Still he must have thought it for the best, or he wouldn't have done it. He may have thought it the best for your sake even more than for his own."

"That is what he tried to convince me of."

Roger began kicking the pebble again. He had not got hold of the right end of the clue. Suddenly he looked up.

"I want to tell you of a girl I know. Her mother died when she was about sixteen—the eldest of a large family. From that

time — all through the bloom of her youth — she gave herself up to her father, first as his comforter, afterwards as his companion, friend, secretary — anything you like. He was a man with a great deal of business on hand, and often came home only to set to afresh to preparations for the next day's work. Harriet was always there, ready to help, to talk, or to be silent. It went on for eight or ten years in this way; and then her father married again, — a woman not many years older than Harriet herself. Well — they are just the happiest set of people I know — you wouldn't have thought it likely, would you?"

She was listening, but she had no heart to say anything. Yet she was interested in this little story of Harriet — a girl who had been so much to her father, more than Molly in this early youth of hers could have been to Mr. Gibson. "How was it?" she sighed out at last.

"Harriet thought of her father's happiness before she thought of her own," Roger answered, with something of severe brevity. Molly needed the bracing. She began to cry again a little.

"If it were for papa's happiness" —

"He must believe that it is. Whatever you fancy, give him a chance. He cannot have much comfort, I should think, if he sees you fretting or pining, — you who have been so much to him, as you say. The lady herself, too — if Harriet's step-mother had been a selfish woman, and been always clutching after the gratification of her own wishes; but she was not: she was as anxious for Harriet to be happy as Harriet was for her father — and your father's future wife may be another of the same kind, though such people are rare."

"I don't think she is, though," murmured Molly, a waft of recollection bringing to her mind the details of her day at the Towers long ago.

Roger did not want to hear Molly's reasons for this doubting speech. He felt as if he had no right to hear more of Mr. Gibson's family life, past, present, or to come, than was absolutely necessary for him, in order that he might comfort and help the crying girl, whom he had come upon so unexpectedly. And besides, he wanted to go home, and be with his mother at lunch-time. Yet he could not leave her alone.

"It is right to hope for the best about everybody, and not to expect the worst. This sounds like a truism, but it has comforted me before now, and some day you'll find it useful. One has always to try to think more of others than of one's self, and it is

best not to prejudice people on the bad side. My sermons aren't long, are they? Have they given you an appetite for lunch? Sermons always make me hungry, I know."

He appeared to be waiting for her to get up and come along with him, as indeed he was. But he meant her to perceive that he should not leave her; so she rose up languidly, too languid to say how much she should prefer being left alone, if he would only go away without her. She was very weak, and stumbled over the straggling root of a tree that projected across the path. He, watchful though silent, saw this stumble, and, putting out his hand, held her up from falling. He still held her hand when the occasion was past; this little physical failure impressed on his heart how young and helpless she was, and he yearned to her, remembering the passion of sorrow in which he had found her, and longing to be of some little tender bit of comfort to her before they parted — before their tête-à-tête walk was merged in the general familiarity of the household life. Yet he did not know what to say.

"You will have thought me hard," he burst out at length, as they were nearing the drawing-room windows and the garden-door. "I never can manage to express what I feel, somehow I always fall to philosophizing, but I am sorry for you. Yes, I am; it's beyond my power to help you, as far as altering facts goes, but I can feel for you in a way which it's best not to talk about, for it can do no good. Remember how sorry I am for you! I shall often be thinking of you, though I dare say it's best not to talk about it again."

She said, "I know you are sorry," under her breath, and then she broke away, and ran indoors, and upstairs to the solitude of her own room. He went straight to his mother, who was sitting before the untasted luncheon, as much annoyed by the mysterious unpunctuality of her visitor as she was capable of being with anything; for she had heard that Mr. Gibson had been, and was gone, and she could not discover if he had left any message for her; and her anxiety about her own health, which some people esteemed hypochondriacal, always made her particularly craving for the wisdom which might fall from her doctor's lips.

"Where have you been, Roger? Where is Molly? — Miss Gibson, I mean," for she was careful to keep up a barrier of forms between the young man and young woman who were thrown together in the same household.

"I've been out dredging. (By the way, I left my net on the terrace walk.) I found

Miss Gibson sitting there, crying as if her heart would break. Her father is going to be married again."

"Married again! You don't say so."

"Yes, he is; and she takes it very hardly, poor girl. Mother, I think if you could send some one to her with a glass of wine, a cup of tea, or something of that sort—she was very nearly fainting"—

"I'll go to her myself, poor child," said Mrs. Hamley, rising.

"Indeed you must not," said he, laying his hand upon her arm. "We have kept you waiting already too long; you are looking quite pale. Hammond can take it," he continued, ringing the bell. She sat down again, almost stunned with surprise.

"Whom is he going to marry?"

"I don't know. I didn't ask, and she didn't tell me."

"That's so like a man. Why, half the character of the affair lies in the question of whom it is that he is going to marry."

"I dare say I ought to have asked. But somehow I'm not a good one on such occasions. I was as sorry as could be for her, and yet I couldn't tell what to say."

"What did you say?"

"I gave her the best advice in my power."

"Advice! you ought to have comforted her. Poor little Molly!"

"I think that if advice is good it's the best comfort."

"That depends on what you mean by advice. Hush! here she is."

"To their surprise, Molly came in, trying hard to look as usual. She had bathed her eyes, and arranged her hair; and was making a great struggle to keep from crying and to bring her voice into order. She was unwilling to distress Mrs. Hamley by the sight of pain and suffering. She did not know that she was following Roger's injunctions to think more of others than of herself—but so she was. Mrs. Hamley was not sure if it was wise in her to begin on the piece of news she had just heard from her son; but she was too full of it herself to talk of anything else. "So I hear your father is going to be married, my dear? May I ask whom it is to?"

"Mrs. Kirkpatrick, I think she was governess a long time ago at the Countess of Cumnor's. She stays with them a great deal, and they call her Clare, and I believe they are very fond of her." Molly tried to speak of her future stepmother in the most favourable manner she knew how.

"I think I've heard of her. Then she is not very young? That's as it should be. A widow too. Has she any family?"

"One girl, I believe. But I know so little about her!"

Molly was very near crying again.

"Never mind, my dear. That will all come in good time. Roger, you've hardly eaten anything; where are you going?"

"To fetch my dredging-net. It's full of things I don't want to lose. Besides, I never eat much, as a general thing." The truth was partly told, not all. He thought he had better leave the other two alone. His mother had such sweet power of sympathy, that she would draw the sting out of the girl's heart in a tête-à-tête. As soon as he was gone, Molly lifted up her poor swelled eyes, and, looking at Mrs. Hamley, she said,—"He was so good to me. I mean and try to remember all he said."

"I'm glad to hear it, love; very glad. From what he told me, I was afraid he had been giving you a little lecture. He has a good heart, but he isn't so tender in his manner as Osborne. Roger is a little rough sometimes."

"Then I like roughness. It did me good. It made me feel how badly—oh, Mrs. Hamley, I did behave so badly to papa this morning."

She rose up and threw herself into Mrs. Hamley's arms, and sobbed upon her breast. Her sorrow was not now for the fact that her father was going to be married again, but for her own ill-behaviour.

If Roger was not tender in words, he was in deeds. Unreasonably and possibly exaggerated as Molly's grief had appeared to him, it was real suffering to her; and he took some pains to lighten it, in his own way, which was characteristic enough. That evening he adjusted his microscope, and put the treasures he had collected in his morning's ramble on a little table; and then he asked his mother to come and admire. Of course Molly came too, and this was what he had intended. He tried to interest her in his pursuit, cherished her first little morsel of curiosity, and nursed it into a very proper desire for further information. Then he brought out books on the subject, and translated the slightly pompous and technical language into homely every-day speech. Molly had come down to dinner, wondering how the long hours till bedtime would ever pass away: hours during which she must not speak on the one thing that would be occupying her mind to the exclusion of all others; for she was afraid that already she had wearied Mrs. Hamley with it during their afternoon tête-à-tête. But prayers and bedtime came long before she had expected; she had been refreshed by a new current of

thought, and she was very thankful to Roger. And now there was to-morrow to come, and a confession of penitence to be made to her father.

But Mr. Gibson did not want speech or words. He was not fond of expressions of feeling at any time, and perhaps, too, he felt that the less said the better on a subject about which it was evident that his daughter and he were not thoroughly and impulsively in harmony. He read her repentance in her eyes; he saw how much she had suffered; and he had a sharp pang at his heart in consequence. But he stopped her from speaking out her regret at her behaviour the day before, by a "There, there, that will do. I know all you want to say. I know my little Molly — my silly little goosey — better than she knows herself. I've brought you an invitation. Lady Cumnor wants you to go and spend next Thursday at the Towers!"

"Do you wish me to go?" said she, her heart sinking.

"I wish you and Hyacinth to become better acquainted — to learn to love each other."

"Hyacinth!" said Molly, entirely bewildered.

"Yes, Hyacinth! It's the silliest name I ever heard of; but it's hers, and I must call her by it. I can't bear Clare, which is what my lady and all the family at the Towers call her; and 'Mrs. Kirkpatrick' is formal and nonsensical too, as she'll change her name so soon."

"When, papa?" asked Molly, feeling as if she were living in a strange, unknown world.

"Not till after Michaelmas." And then, continuing on his own thoughts, he added, "And the worst is, she's gone and perpetuated her own affected name by having her daughter called after her. Cynthia! One thinks of the moon, and the man in the moon with his bundle of faggots. I'm thankful you're plain Molly, child."

"How old is she — Cynthia, I mean?"

"Ay, get accustomed to the name. I should think Cynthia Kirkpatrick was about as old as you are. She's at school in France, picking up airs and graces. She's to come home for the wedding, so you'll be able to get acquainted with her then; though I think she's to go back again for another half-year or so."

CHAPTER XI.

MAKING FRIENDSHIP.

MR. GIBSON believed that Cynthia Kirk-

patrick was to return to England to be present at her mother's wedding; but Mrs. Kirkpatrick had no such intention. She was not what is commonly called a woman of determination; but somehow what she disliked she avoided, and what she liked she tried to do, or to have. So although in the conversation, which she had already led to, as to the when and the how she was to be married, she had listened quietly to Mr. Gibson's proposal, that Molly and Cynthia should be the two bridesmaids, she had felt how disagreeable it would be to her to have her young daughter flashing out her beauty by the side of the faded bride, her mother; and as the further arrangements for the wedding became more definite, she saw further reasons in her own mind for Cynthia's remaining quietly at her school at Boulogne.

Mrs. Kirkpatrick had gone to bed that first night of her engagement to Mr. Gibson, fully anticipating a speedy marriage. She looked to it as a release from the thralldom of keeping school; keeping an unprofitable school, with barely enough of pupils to pay for house-rent and taxes, food, washing, and the requisite masters. She saw no reason for ever going back to Ashcombe, except to wind up her affairs, and to pack up her clothes. She hoped that Mr. Gibson's ardour would be such that he would press on the marriage, and urge her never to resume her school drudgery, but to relinquish it now and for ever. She even made up a very pretty, very passionate speech for him in her own mind; quite sufficiently strong to prevail upon her, and to overthrow the scruples which she felt that she ought to have at telling the parents of her pupils that she did not intend to resume school, and that they must find another place of education for their daughters, in the last week but one of the midsummer holidays.

It was rather like a douche of cold water on Mrs. Kirkpatrick's plans, when the next morning at breakfast Lady Cumnor began to decide upon the arrangements and duties of the two middle-aged lovers.

"Of course you can't give up your school all at once, Clare. The wedding can't be before Christmas, but that will do very well. We shall all be down at the Towers; and it will be a nice amusement for the children to go over to Ashcombe, and see you married."

"I don't think — I'm afraid — I don't believe Mr. Gibson will like waiting so long; men are so impatient, under these circumstances."

"Oh, nonsense! Lord Cumnor has recommended you to his tenants, and I am sure

he wouldn't like them to be put to any inconvenience. Mr. Gibson will see that in a moment. He's a man of sense, or else he wouldn't be our family doctor. Now, what are you going to do about your little girl? Have you fixed yet?

"No. Yesterday there seemed so little time, and when one is agitated it is so difficult to think of anything. Cynthia is nearly eighteen, old enough to go out as a governess, if he wishes it, but I don't think he will. He is so generous and kind!"

"Well! I must give you time to settle some of your affairs to day. Don't waste it in sentiment; you're too old for that. Come to a clear understanding with each other; it will be for your happiness in the long-run."

So they did come to a clear understanding about one or two things. To Mrs. Kirkpatrick's dismay, she found that Mr. Gibson had no more idea than Lady Cumnor of her breaking faith with the parents of her pupils. Though he really was at a serious loss as to what was to become of Molly until she could be under the protection of his new wife at her own home, and though his domestic worries teased him more and more every day, he was too honourable to think of persuading Mrs. Kirkpatrick to give up school a week sooner than was right for his sake. He did not even perceive how easy the task of persuasion would be; with all her winning wiles she could scarcely lead him to feel impatience for the wedding to take place at Michaelmas.

"I can hardly tell what a comfort and relief it will be to me, Hyacinth, when you are once my wife—the mistress of my home—poor little Molly's mother and protector; but I wouldn't interfere with your previous engagements for the world. It wouldn't be right."

"Thank you, my own love. How good you are! So many men would think only of their own wishes and interests! I'm sure the parents of my dear pupils will admire you—will be quite surprised at your consideration for their interests."

"Don't tell them, then. I hate being admired. Why shouldn't you say it is your wish to keep on your school till they've had time to look out for another?"

"Because it isn't," said she, daring all. "I long to be making you happy; I want to make your home a place of rest and comfort to you; and I do so wish to cherish your sweet Molly, as I hope to do, when I come to be her mother. I can't take virtue to myself which doesn't belong to me. If I have to speak for myself, I shall say 'Good

people, find a school for your daughters by Michaelmas,—for after that time I must go and make the happiness of others. I can't bear to think of your long rides in November—coming home wet at night with no one to take care of you. Oh! if you leave it to me, I shall advise the parents to take their daughters away from the care of one whose heart will be absent. Though I couldn't consent to any time before Michaelmas—that wouldn't be fair or right—and I'm sure you wouldn't urge me—you are too good."

"Well, if you think that they will consider we have acted uprightly by them, let it be Michaelmas with all my heart. What does Lady Cumnor say?"

"Oh! I told her I was afraid you wouldn't like waiting, because of your difficulties with your servants, and because of Molly—it would be so desirable to enter on the new relationship with her as soon as possible."

"To be sure; so it would. Poor child! I'm afraid the intelligence of my engagement has rather startled her."

"Cynthia will feel it deeply, too," said Mrs. Kirkpatrick, unwilling to let her daughter be behind Mr. Gibson's in sensibility and affection.

"We will have her over to the wedding! She and Molly shall be bridesmaids," said Mr. Gibson, in the unguarded warmth of his heart.

This plan did not quite suit Mrs. Kirkpatrick; but she thought it best not to oppose it, until she had a presentable excuse to give, and perhaps also some reason would naturally arise out of future circumstances; so at this time she only smiled, and softly pressed the hand she held in hers.

It is a question whether Mrs. Kirkpatrick or Molly wished the most for the day to be over which they were to spend together at the Towers. Mrs. Kirkpatrick was rather weary of girls as a class. All the trials of her life were connected with girls in some way. She was very young when she first became a governess, and had been worsted in her struggles with her pupils, in the first place she ever went to. Her elegance of appearance and manner, and her accomplishments, more than her character and acquirements, had rendered it more easy for her than for most to obtain good "situations;" and she had been absolutely petted in some; but still she was constantly encountering naughty or stubborn, or over-conscientious, or severe-judging, or curious and observant girls. And again, before

Cynthia was born, she had longed for a boy, thinking it possible that if some three or four intervening relations died, he might come to be a baronet; and instead of a son, lo and behold it was a daughter! Nevertheless, with all her dislike to girls in the abstract as "the plagues of her life" (and her aversion was not diminished by the fact of her having kept a school for "young ladies" at Ashcombe), she really meant to be as kind as she could be to her new step-daughter, whom she remembered principally as a black-haired, sleepy child, in whose eyes she had read admiration of herself. Mrs. Kirkpatrick accepted Mr. Gibson principally because she was tired of the struggle of earning her own livelihood; but she liked him personally — nay, she even loved him in her torpid way, and she intended to be good to his daughter, though she felt as if it would have been easier for her to have been good to his son.

Molly was bracing herself up in her way too. "I will be like Harriet. I will think of others. I won't think of myself," she kept repeating all the way to the Towers. But there was no selfishness in wishing that the day was come to an end, and that she did very heartily. Mrs. Hamley sent her thither in the carriage, which was to wait and bring her back at night. Mrs. Hamley wanted Molly to make a favourable impression, and she sent for her to come and show herself before she set out.

"Don't put on your silk gown — your white muslin will look the nicest, my dear."

"Not my silk? it is quite new! I had it to come here."

"Still, I think your white muslin suits you the best." "Anything but that horrid plaid silk" was the thought in Mrs. Hamley's mind; and, thanks to her, Molly set off for the Towers, looking a little quaint, it is true, but thoroughly lady-like, if she was old-fashioned. Her father was to meet her there; but he had been detained, and she had to face Mrs. Kirkpatrick by herself, the recollection of her last day of misery at the Towers fresh in her mind as if it had been yesterday. Mrs. Kirkpatrick was as caressing as could be. She held Molly's hand in hers, as they sate together in the library, after the first salutations were over. She kept stroking it from time to time, and purring out inarticulate sounds of loving satisfaction, as she gazed in the blushing face.

"What eyes! so like your dear father's! How we shall love each other — sha'n't we, darling? For his sake!"

"I'll try," said Molly, bravely; and then she could not finish her sentence.

"And you've just got the same beautiful black curling hair!" said Mrs. Kirkpatrick, softly lifting one of Molly's curls from off her white temple.

"Papa's hair is growing gray," said Molly.

"Is it? I never see it. I never shall see it. He will always be to me the handsomest of men."

Mr. Gibson was really a very handsome man, and Molly was pleased with the compliment; but she could not help saying, —

"Still he will grow old, and his hair will grow gray. I think he will be just as handsome, but it won't be as a young man."

"Ah! that's just it, love. He'll always be handsome; some people always are. And he is so fond of you, dear." Molly's colour flashed into her face. She did not want an assurance of her own father's love from this strange woman. She could not help being angry; all she could do was to keep silent. "You don't know how he speaks of you; 'his little treasure,' as he calls you. I'm almost jealous sometimes."

Molly took her hand away, and her heart began to harden; these speeches were so discordant to her. But she set her teeth together, and "tried to be good."

"We must make him so happy. I'm afraid he has had a great deal to annoy him at home; but we will do away with all that now. You must tell me," seeing the cloud in Molly's eyes, "what he likes and dislikes, for of course you will know."

Molly's face cleared a little; of course she did know. She had not watched and loved him so long without believing that she understood him better than any one else; though how he had come to like Mrs. Kirkpatrick enough to wish to marry her, was an unsolved problem that she unconsciously put aside as inexplicable. Mrs. Kirkpatrick went on, — "All men have their fancies and antipathies, even the wisest. I have known some gentlemen annoyed beyond measure by the merest trifles; leaving a door open, or spilling tea in their saucers, or a shawl crookedly put on. Why," continued she, lowering her voice, "I know of a house to which Lord Hollingford will never be asked again because he didn't wipe his shoes on both the mats in the hall! Now you must tell me what you dear father dislikes most in these fanciful ways, and I shall take care to avoid it. You must be my little friend and helper in pleasing him. It will be such a pleasure to me to attend to his slightest

fancies. About my dress, too — what colours does he like best? I want to do everything in my power with a view to his approval."

Molly was gratified by all this, and began to think that really, after all, perhaps her father had done well for himself; and that, if she could help towards his new happiness, she ought to do it. So she tried very conscientiously to think over Mr. Gibson's wishes and ways; to ponder over what annoyed him the most in his household.

"I think," said she, "papa isn't particular about many things; but I think our not having the dinner quite punctual — quite ready for him when he comes in, fidgets him more than anything. You see, he has often had a long ride, and there is another long ride to come, and he has only half-an-hour — sometimes only a quarter — to eat his dinner in."

"Thank you, my own love. Punctuality! Yes; it's a great thing in a household. It's what I've had to enforce with my young ladies at Ashcombe. No wonder poor dear Mr. Gibson has been displeased at his dinner not being ready, and he so hard-worked!"

"Papa doesn't care what he has, if it's only ready. He would take bread and cheese, if cook would only send it in instead of dinner."

"Bread and cheese! Does Mr. Gibson eat cheese?"

"Yes; he's very fond of it," said Molly, innocently. "I've known him eat toasted cheese when he has been too tired to fancy anything else."

"Oh! but, my dear, we must change all that. I shouldn't like to think of your father eating cheese; it's such a strong-smelling, coarse kind of thing. We must get him a cook who can toss him up an omelette, or something elegant. Cheese is only fit for the kitchen."

"Papa is very fond of it," persevered Molly.

"Oh! but we will cure him of that. I couldn't bear the smell of cheese; and I'm sure he would be sorry to annoy me."

Molly was silent; it did not do, she found, to be too minute in telling about her father's likes or dislikes. She had better leave them for Mrs. Kirkpatrick to find out for herself. It was an awkward pause; each was trying to find something agreeable to say. Molly spoke at length. "Please! I should so like to know something about Cynthia — your daughter."

"Yes, call her Cynthia. It's a pretty name, isn't it? Cynthia Kirkpatrick. Not so pretty, though, as my old name, Hyacinth

Clare. People used to say it suited me so well. I must show you an acrostic a gentleman — he was a lieutenant in the 53d — made upon it. Oh! we shall have a great deal to say to each other, I foresee!"

"But about Cynthia?"

"Oh, yes! about dear Cynthia. What do you want to know, my dear?"

"Papa said she was to live with us! When will she come?"

"Oh, was it not sweet of your kind father? I thought of nothing else but Cynthia's going out as a governess when she had completed her education; she has been brought up for it, and has had great advantages. But good dear Mr. Gibson wouldn't hear of it. He said yesterday that she must come and live with us when she left school."

"When will she leave school?"

"She went for two years. I don't think I must let her leave before next summer. She teaches English as well as learning French. Next summer she shall come home, and then sha'n't we be a happy little quartette?"

"I hope so," said Molly. "But she is to come to the wedding, isn't she?" she went on timidly, not knowing how far Mrs. Kirkpatrick would like the allusion to her marriage.

"Your father has begged for her to come; but we must think about it a little more before quite fixing it. The journey is a great expense!"

"Is she like you? I do so want to see her."

"She is very handsome, people say. In the bright-coloured style, — perhaps something like what I was. But I like the dark-haired foreign kind of beauty best — just now," touching Molly's hair, and looking at her with an expression of sentimental remembrance.

"Does Cynthia — is she very clever and accomplished?" asked Molly, a little afraid lest the answer should remove Miss Kirkpatrick at too great a distance from her.

"She ought to be; I've paid ever so much money to have her taught by the best masters. But you will see her before long, and I'm afraid we must go now to Lady Cumnor. It has been very charming having you all to myself, but I know Lady Cumnor will be expecting us now, and she was very curious to see you, — my future daughter, as she calls you."

Molly followed Mrs. Kirkpatrick into the morning-room, where Lady Cumnor was sitting — a little annoyed, because, having completed her toilette earlier than usual,

Clare had not been aware by instinct of the fact, and so had not brought Molly Gibson for inspection a quarter of an hour before. Every small occurrence is an event in the day of a convalescent invalid, and a little while ago Molly would have met with patronizing appreciation, where now she had to encounter criticism. Of Lady Cumnor's character as an individual she knew nothing; she only knew she was going to see and be seen by a live countess; nay, more, by "the countess" of Hollingford.

Mrs. Kirkpatrick led her into Lady Cumnor's presence by the hand, and in presenting her said,—"My dear little daughter, Lady Cumnor!"

"Now, Clare, don't let me have nonsense. She is not your daughter yet, and may never be,—I believe that one-third of the engagements I have heard of have never come to marriages. Miss Gibson, I am very glad to see you, for your father's sake; when I know you better, I hope it will be for your own."

Molly very heartily hoped that she might never be known any better by the stern-looking lady who sate so uprightly in the easy chair, prepared for lounging, and which therefore gave all the more effect to the stiff attitude. Lady Cumnor luckily took Molly's silence for acquiescent humility, and went on speaking after a further little pause of inspection.

"Yes, yes, I like her looks, Clare. You may make something of her. It will be a great advantage to you, my dear, to have a lady who has trained up several young people of quality always about you just at the time when you are growing up. I'll tell you what, Clare!"—a sudden thought striking her,— "you and she must become better acquainted—you know nothing of each other at present; you are not to be married till Christmas, and what could be better than that she should go back with you to Ashcombe! She would be with you constantly, and have the advantage of the companionship of your young people, which would be a good thing for an only child! It's a capital plan; I'm very glad I thought of it!"

Now it would be difficult to say which of Lady Cumnor's two hearers was the most dismayed at the idea which had taken possession of her. Mrs. Kirkpatrick had no fancy for being encumbered with a step-daughter before her time. If Molly came to be an inmate of her house, farewell to many little background economies, and a still more serious farewell to many little indulgences, that were innocent enough in themselves, but which Mrs. Kirkpatrick's former life had

caused her to look upon as sins to be concealed: the dirty dog's-eared delightful novel from the Ashcombe circulating library, the leaves of which she turned over with a pair of scissors; the lounging-chair which she had for use at her own home, straight and upright as she sate now in Lady Cumnor's presence; the dainty morsel, savoury and small, to which she treated herself for her own solitary supper,—all these and many other similarly pleasant things would have to be foregone if Molly came to be her pupil, parlour-boarder, or visitor, as Lady Cumnor was planning. One—two things Clare was instinctively resolved upon: to be married at Michaelmas, and not to have Molly at Ashcombe. But she smiled as sweetly as if the plan proposed was the most charming project in the world, while all the time her poor brains were beating about in every bush for the reasons or excuses of which she should make use at some future time. Molly, however, saved her all this trouble. It was a question which of the three was the most surprised by the words which burst out of her lips. She did not mean to speak, but her heart was very full, and almost before she was aware of her thought she heard herself saying,—

"I don't think it would be nice at all. I mean my lady, that I should dislike it very much; it would be taking me away from papa just these very few last months. I will like you," she went on, her eyes full of tears; and, turning to Mrs. Kirkpatrick, she put her hand into her future stepmother's with the prettiest and most trustful action. "I will try hard to love you, and to do all I can to make you happy; but you must not take me away from papa just this very last bit of time that I shall have him."

Mrs. Kirkpatrick fondled the hand thus placed in hers, and was grateful to the girl for her outspoken opposition to Lady Cumnor's plans. Clare was, however, exceedingly unwilling to back up Molly by any words of her own until Lady Cumnor had spoken and given the cue. But there was something in Molly's little speech, or in her straightforward manner, that amused instead of irritating Lady Cumnor in her present mood. Perhaps she was tired of the silkiness with which she had been shut up for so many days.

She put up her glasses, and looked at them both before speaking. Then she said—"Upon my word, young lady! Why, Clare, you've got your work before you! Not but what there is a good deal of truth in what she says. It must be very disagreeable to a girl of her age to have a step-

mother coming in between her father and herself, whatever may be the advantages to her in the long-run."

Molly almost felt as if she could make a friend of the stiff old countess, for her clearness of sight as to the plan proposed being a trial; but she was afraid, in her new-born desire of thinking for others, of Mrs. Kirkpatrick being hurt. She need not have feared as far as outward signs went, for the smile was still on that lady's pretty rosy lips, and the soft fondling of her hand never stopped. Lady Cumnor was more interested in Molly the more she looked at her; and her gaze was pretty steady through her gold-rimmed eye-glasses. She began a sort of catechism; a string of very straightforward questions, such as any lady under the rank of countess might have scrupled to ask, but which were not unkindly meant.

"You are sixteen, are you not?"

"No; I am seventeen. My birthday was three weeks ago."

"Very much the same thing, I should think. Have you ever been to school?"

"No, never! Miss Eyre has taught me everything I know."

"Umph! Miss Eyre was your governess, I suppose? I should not have thought your father could have afforded to keep a governess. But of course he must know his own affairs best."

"Certainly, my lady," replied Molly, a little touchy as to any reflection on her father's wisdom.

"You say 'certainly!' as if it was a matter of course that every one should know their own affairs best. You are very young, Miss Gibson—very. You'll know better before you come to my age. And I suppose you've been taught music, and the use of the globes, and French, and all the usual accomplishments, since you have had a governess? I never heard of such nonsense!" she went on, lashing herself up.

"An only daughter! If there had been half-a-dozen girls, there might have been some sense in it."

Molly did not speak, but it was by a strong effort that she kept silence. Mrs. Kirkpatrick fondled her hand more perseveringly than ever, hoping thus to express a sufficient amount of sympathy to prevent her from saying anything injudicious. But the caress had become wearisome to Molly, and only irritated her nerves. She took her hand out of Mrs. Kirkpatrick's, with a slight manifestation of impatience.

It was, perhaps, fortunate for the general peace that just at this moment Mr. Gibson

was announced. It is odd enough to see how the entrance of a person of the opposite sex into an assemblage of either men or women calms down the little discordances and the disturbance of mood. It was the case now; at Mr. Gibson's entrance my lady took off her glasses, and smoothed her brow; Mrs. Kirkpatrick managed to get up a very becoming blush; and as for Molly, her face glowed with delight, and the white teeth and pretty dimples came out like sunlight on a landscape.

Of course, after the first greeting, my lady had to have a private interview with her doctor; and Molly and her future step-mother wandered about in the gardens with their arms round each other's waists, or hand in hand, like two babes in the wood; Mrs. Kirkpatrick active in such endearments, Molly passive, and feeling within herself very shy and strange; for she had that particular kind of shy modesty which makes any one uncomfortable at receiving caresses from a person towards whom the heart does not go forth with an impulsive welcome.

Then came the early dinner; Lady Cumnor having hers in the quiet of her own room, to which she was still a prisoner. Once or twice during the meal, the idea crossed Molly's mind that her father disliked his position as a middle-aged lover being made so evident to the men in waiting as it was by Mrs. Kirkpatrick's affectionate speeches and innuendoes. He tried to banish every tint of pink sentimentalism from the conversation, and to confine it to matter of fact; and when Mrs. Kirkpatrick would persevere in dwelling upon such facts as had a bearing upon the future relationship of the parties, he insisted upon viewing them in the most matter-of-fact way; and this continued even after the men had left the room. An old rhyme Molly had heard Betty use would keep running in her head and making her uneasy,—

Two is company,
Three is trumpery.

But where could she go in that strange house? What ought she to do? She was roused from this fit of wonder and abstraction by her father's saying, "What do you think of this plan of Lady Cumnor's? She says she was advising you to have Molly as a visitor at Ashcombe until we are married."

Mrs. Kirkpatrick's countenance fell. If only Molly would be so good as to testify again, as she had done before Lady Cumnor! But if the proposal was made by her father,

it would come to his daughter from a different quarter than it had done from a strange lady, be she ever so great. Molly did not say anything; she only looked pale, and wistful, and anxious. Mrs. Kirkpatrick had to speak for herself.

"It would be a charming plan, only — Well! we know why we had rather not have it, don't we, love? And we won't tell papa, for fear of making him vain. No! I think I must leave her with you, dear Mr. Gibson, for a tête-à-tête for these last few weeks. It would be cruel to take her away."

"But you know, my dear, I told you of the reason why it does not do to have Molly at home just at present," said Mr. Gibson eagerly.

For the more he knew of his future wife, the more he felt it necessary to remember that, with all her foibles, she would be able to stand between Molly and any such adventures as that which had occurred lately with Mr. Cox; so that one of the good reasons for the step he had taken was always present to him, while it had slipped off the smooth surface of Mrs. Kirkpatrick's mirror-like mind without leaving any impression. She now recalled it, on seeing Mr. Gibson's anxious face.

But what were Molly's feelings at these last words of her father's? She had been sent from home for some reason, kept a secret from her, but told to this strange woman. Was there to be perfect confidence between these two, and she to be forever shut out? Was she, and what concerned her — though how she did not know — to be discussed between them for the future, and she to be kept in the dark? A bitter pang of jealousy made her heart-sick. She might as well go to Ashcombe, or anywhere else, now. Thinking more of others' happiness than of her own was very fine; but did it not mean giving up her very individuality, quenching all the warm love, the true desires, that made her herself? Yet in this deadness lay her only comfort; or so it seemed. Wandering in such mazes, she hardly knew how the conversation went on; a third was indeed "trumpety," where there was entire confidence between the two who were company, from which the other was shut out. She was positively unhappy, and her father did not appear to see it; he was absorbed with his new plans and his new wife that was to be. But he did notice it, and was truly sorry for his little girl; only he thought that there was a greater chance for the future harmony of the household, if he did not lead Molly to define her present feelings by putting them into words. It was his general

plan to repress emotion by not showing the sympathy he felt. Yet, when he had to leave, he took Molly's hand in his, and held it there, in such a different manner to that in which Mrs. Kirkpatrick had done; and his voice softened to his child as he bade her good-by, and added the words (most unusual to him), "God bless you, child!"

Molly had held up all the day bravely; she had not shown anger, or repugnance, or annoyance, or regret; but when once more by herself in the Hamley carriage, she burst into a passion of tears, and cried her fill till she reached the village of Hamley. Then she tried in vain to smooth her face into smiles, and do away with the other signs of her grief. She only hoped she could run upstairs to her own room without notice, and bathe her eyes in cold water before she was seen. But at the hall-door she was caught by the squire and Roger coming in from an after-dinner stroll in the garden, and hospitably anxious to help her to alight. Roger saw the state of things in an instant, and saying —

"My mother has been looking for you to come back for this last hour," he led the way to the drawing-room. But Mrs. Hamley was not there; the squire had stopped to speak to the coachman about one of the horses; they two were alone. Roger said, —

"I am afraid you have had a very trying day. I have thought of you several times, for I know how awkward these new relations are."

"Thank you," said she, her lips trembling, and on the point of crying again. "I did try to remember what you said, and to think more of others, but it is so difficult sometimes; you know it is, don't you?"

"Yes," said he, gravely. He was gratified by her simple confession of having borne his words of advice in mind, and tried to act up to them. He was but a very young man, and he was honestly flattered; perhaps this led him on to offer more advice, and this time it was evidently mingled with sympathy. He did not want to draw out her confidence, which he felt might very easily be done with such a simple girl; but he wished to help her by giving her a few of the principles on which he had learnt to rely. "It is difficult," he went on, "but by-and-by you will be so much happier for it."

"No, I sha'n't!" said Molly, shaking her head. "It will be very dull when I shall have killed myself, as it were, and live only in trying to do, and to be, as other people like. I don't see any end to it. I might as

well never have lived. And as for the happiness you speak of, I shall never be happy again."

There was an unconscious depth in what she said, that Roger did not know how to answer at the moment; it was easier to address himself to the assertion of the girl of seventeen, that she should never be happy again.

"Nonsense: perhaps in ten years' time you will be looking back on this trial as a very light one—who knows?"

"I dare say it seems foolish; perhaps all our earthly trials will appear foolish to us after a while; perhaps they seem so now to angels. But we are ourselves, you know, and this is now, not some time to come, a long, long way off. And we are not angels, to be comforted by seeing the ends for which everything is sent."

She had never spoken so long a sentence to him before; and when she had said it, though she did not take her eyes away from his, as they stood steadily looking at each other, she blushed a little; she could not have told why. Nor did he tell himself why a sudden pleasure came over him as he gazed at her simple expressive face—and for a moment lost the sense of what she was saying, in the sensation of pity for her sad earnestness. In an instant more he was himself again. Only it is pleasant to the wisest, most reasonable youth of one or two and twenty to find himself looked up to as a Mentor by a girl of seventeen.

"I know, I understand. Yes: it is *now* we have to do with. Don't let us go into metaphysics." Molly opened her eyes wide at this. Had she been talking metaphysics without knowing it? "One looks forward to a mass of trials, which will only have to be encountered one by one, little by little. Oh, here is my mother! she will tell you better than I can."

And the tête-à-tête was merged in a trio. Mrs. Hamley lay down; she had not been well all day,—she had missed Molly, she said,—and now she wanted to hear of all the adventures that had occurred to the girl at the Towers. Molly sate on a stool close to the head of the sofa, and Roger, though at first he took up a book and tried to read that he might be no restraint, soon found his reading all a pretence: it was so inter-

esting to listen to Molly's little narrative, and, besides, if he could give her any help in her time of need, was it not his duty to make himself acquainted with all the circumstances of her case?

And so they went on during all the remaining time of Molly's stay at Hamley. Mrs. Hamley sympathized, and liked to hear details; as the French say, her sympathy was given *en détail*, the squire's *en gros*. He was very sorry for her evident grief, and almost felt guilty, as if he had had a share in bringing it about by the mention he had made of the possibility of Mr. Gibson's marrying again. When first Molly had come on her visit to them. He said to his wife more than once,—

"'Pon my word, now, I wish I'd never spoken those unlucky words that first day at dinner. Do you remember how she took them up? It was like a prophecy of what was to come, now, wasn't it? And she looked pale from that day, and I don't think she has ever fairly enjoyed her food since. I must take more care what I say for the future. Not but what Gibson is doing the very best thing, both for himself and her, that he can do. I told him so only yesterday. But I'm very sorry for the little girl, though. I wish I'd never spoken about it, that I do! but it was like a prophecy, wasn't it?"

Roger tried hard to find out a reasonable and right method of comfort, for he too, in his way, was sorry for the girl, who bravely struggled to be cheerful, in spite of her own private grief, for his mother's sake. He felt as if high principle and noble precept ought to perform an immediate work. But they do not, for there is always the unknown quantity of individual experience and feeling, which offer a tacit resistance, the amount incalculable by another, to all good counsel and high decree. But the bond between the Mentor and his Telemachus strengthened every day. He endeavoured to lead her out of morbid thought into interest in other than personal things; and, naturally enough, his own objects of interest came readiest to hand. She felt that he did her good, she did not know why or how; but after a talk with him, she always fancied that she had got the clue to goodness and peace, whatever befell.

From the North British Review.

1. *Memoirs, Miscellanies, and Letters of the late Lucy Aikin.* Edited by P. H. LE BRETON. Longmans, 1864.
2. *Fugitive Verses.* By JOANNA BAILLIE. Moxon, 1864.
3. *Selections from the Letters of Caroline Frances Cornwallis.* London: Trübner and Co., 1864.

It cannot be doubted that a marked difference in the relations of the female sex to the literary culture of the day, as compared with the state of things two generations back, is one result of the intellectual march of the present century. Female authorship is far more common than it was, is far more enterprising than it was; it is more 'business-like,' and has less of the flutter of self-consciousness; while, by a natural consequence, it attracts far less of special notice and compliment than it formerly did. For we must not overstate the case as regards the discouragement which the woman of letters is generally supposed to have received from the ruling sex. Ladies who belonged to a favoured clique were sure, in olden times as well as now, of credit and renown. Poor Mrs. Elstob, one of the first Saxon scholars of her day, could indeed pine in drudgery and obscurity, but Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, Fanny Burney, with a select circle of attendant nymphs great in the minor morals, were praised up to and beyond their deserts; and though "F. B." confined herself to novel-writing, a department in which women have always been allowed certain chartered rights, and Mrs. Chapone and Miss Talbot were strictly feminine in their aspirations, yet the authoress of the *Essay on Shakspeare*, and the translator of *Epictetus*, boldly trenched on ground which, in those days at all events, masculine intellects considered exclusively their own. When angry, it is true, Johnson could speak hard words of Mrs. Montagu's Latin and Greek; but the wonderful feat of translating *Epictetus* seems to have placed Mrs. Carter on a pedestal which even the surly dictator did not grudge her, though possibly her discreet backwardness in exposing her acquirements to the ordeal of conversation may have had something to do with his indulgence. "My old friend Mrs. Carter," he said, "could make a pudding as well as translate *Epictetus* from the Greek, and work a handkerchief as well as compose a poem." . . . "He thought, however," adds Boswell, "that she was too reserved in conversation upon subjects she was so eminently able to

converse upon, which was occasioned by her modesty and fear of giving offence."

No doubt, in the middle of the eighteenth century, the women of the upper classes were, taken as a whole, more rational and capable beings than they had been in the days of the *Spectator*. In one of the conversations recorded by Fanny Burney, we find Dr. Johnson expressing in strong terms his sense of the advance made within his own recollection. "He told them he well remembered when a woman who could spell a common letter was regarded as all-accomplished; but now they vied with the men in everything."* Still we cannot turn over the familiar correspondence of the miniature Sapphos and Hypatias of Johnson's time, without discerning how strongly the consciousness of special merit worked within them. We see it in the ostentatious modesty which is sometimes more significant than braggart boasting; we see it in the little pedantries of style and allusion with which they trick out the merest commonplace of sentiment. For real scholarlike appreciation of the subjects they deal with, we should look in vain in the lucubrations of the most renowned female students of that day:—poor Mrs. Elstob, already referred to, whose Anglo-Saxon researches really were worth something, never attained worldly repute. The conclusions they draw from their own investigations into the wellsprings of knowledge are mostly moralizings of a general cast, trite and jejune we should now say; but then it is fair to remember that there was a very strong and prevailing bent among all thinkers, shallow and deep, towards moral and metaphysical didactics in that age, and the "Rambler" himself could utter pompous platitudes sometimes.

But to revert to our argument. Allowing that a change had taken place in the intellectual position of the weaker sex, between the era of Addison and that of Johnson, there has assuredly been a change also no less distinctly perceptible in its position between Johnson's days and our own, and one that has been proceeding at a vastly accelerated pace within the last five-and-thirty years. The date of the Reform Bill, though it seems but as yesterday to many still in the full vigour of life, carries us back to an antiquated world in many respects; in this among others. The literary atmosphere was still reverberating with the echoes of the poetry and romance which had glorified the long years of European strife and agitation. But Byron was in his recent

* *Diary of Madame D'Arblay*, vol. i. p. 277.

grave; Scott was wielding with a paralyzed hand the pen that had fascinated the heads and hearts of his generation; Southey had written the last of his epics, and people had almost ceased to read them. Wordsworth was the poet of the day; but his admirers were comparatively few and select. His muse was placid and meditative; the shout of the Forum was to be raised in honour of other deities than those of Parnassus. Science, education for the masses, political enfranchisement, became the prevailing topics in men's mouths. Sentiment yielded to utility, the illusions of chivalry to hard material progress. A certain scarcely disguised superciliousness in the tone hitherto assumed towards science by men who had been brought up in the poetical and historical cultivation of the Georgian era now gave way to a much more respectful appreciation of her claims. The old prejudices against the 'ologies rapidly disappeared. The classification of plants and stones, hitherto in the polite world looked upon as little more than an elegant diversion for idle hours, assumed a more serious significance as means towards unlocking creation's mysteries. The history of the earth's formation was becoming a subject to be feared, indeed, in the eyes of many, but no longer to be despised.

It was from about this same epoch, as we take it, that the term "blue-stocking," first applied in the Johnsonian society to ladies of literary pretension or acquirement, began to grow obsolete. In the intensified zest and value for practical and scientific knowledge which now set in, the world came to forget its prejudices of sex as well as of caste, and to prize any contribution to the current stock of information for what it was worth. This, at least, was the tendency of things; but, as always happens, the force of new principles began to be felt long before they effectually leavened the general mass of opinion; and it was not for many a year after the Society for the "Diffusion of Useful Knowledge," and the "Library of Entertaining" ditto, and Penny Magazines, and Mrs. Marcet's *Popular Conversations on Science*, and Miss Martineau's *Tales illustrative of the Principles of Political Economy*, had instructed the minds of the new generation, that the authoress who ventured on any ground save that of fiction or mild ethical rede ceased to be regarded by a considerable portion of society as something of an unfeminine intruder, a "blue," and a pretender, probably superficial, and certainly presumptuous.

Our reflections on this subject have been

prompted by two publications of the past year: the Memoir and Letters of Miss Aikin, and the Letters of Miss Cornwallis. Both these ladies died within the last seven years; both lived through the period of which we have been speaking; and both reflected very distinctly, in the tone of their minds and the bent of their studies, the character of that period in its successive stages of development. Circumstances and natural disposition, however, had affixed considerable differences between them. The one, long known to the world as an historical writer of some pretension, and a friend and correspondent of several eminent literary characters of her day, had outlived her maximum of reputation; and that reputation had been perhaps a little enhanced by the odour of "blue" notoriety still attaching to petticoated authors when she began to write. The other was entirely unknown to the world till death cancelled the obligation of secrecy, and revealed her as the writer of some anonymous works of more original thought and more varied range of matter than even clever women have in general proved themselves able to command—a recluse shrinking from observation, not possessing any influential connection in the world of letters, working patiently, earnestly, with deep convictions, against the surface-current of her times, taking up a place with the pioneers of new thought, even when old ties and associations beckoned her powerfully backwards; most reluctant to display, yet proudly conscious of possessing, capacities of insight and of reasoning far beyond the limits usually assigned to her sex.

Miss Aikin's career challenges observation first, for her literary character belongs to an older chapter of the period than that of Miss Cornwallis. She had by a few years too the priority of age. Miss Aikin may be said, to use Sir Nathaniel's phrase in *Love's Labour's Lost*, to have "eat paper" and "drunk ink" from her earliest years. Her intellectual training was derived from the Presbyterian society of the last century, that section of it which had left Calvinism behind, and had accepted Socinianism as its doctrinal creed, and which was characterized by a great zeal and ardour for mental progress, and a sovereign contempt for ancient bigotry. 1781 was the year of her birth. Her father was Dr. Aikin, a physician first practising at Warrington, then at Yarmouth, subsequently residing at Stoke-Newington, where he gave himself up to literary avocations, and edited the *Annual Register*, the *Monthly Magazine*, and another literary journal of the day, called the *Athenæum*, and was part author of the *Biographical Diction-*

ary, afterwards published by Dr. Enfield. A very favourite work for juveniles, not yet forgotten, called *Evenings at Home*, was also his composition, in conjunction with his accomplished sister, Mrs. Barbauld, who, to a noted capacity for instructing the young, added herself also literary and poetical talent of a very refined order, and was in all respects a most admirable woman. Miss Aikin's friends and relations all round were literary in their tastes and reputations,—the Roscoes of Liverpool, the Taylors of Norwich, the Enfields, the Kerricks,—worthy names all in the annals of the pen. She was only in her seventeenth year when she took up the family trick of writing. Her father's editorial functions gave her easy access to reviews and magazines; and occasional verses, essays, and translations were the first flights of her ambition. The decided bent of her mind, however, was towards history; and her first publication of any consequence was the *Memoirs of the Court of Queen Elizabeth*, which appeared in 1819, and drew on her no small degree of attention. It may indeed be fairly considered a noteworthy book of its time. It had merits of its own, in a lively, intelligent, impartial style of narrative, and was, we believe, the first of those works of historical gossip which Miss Strickland's indefatigable labours have since made so familiar to the public, and to which Walter Scott's novels no doubt contributed a powerful impulse. But it should be remembered, and Miss Aikin must have the credit due from the fact, that she began to contemplate her work in 1814, before even the first of the *Waverley Novels* had appeared; years before *Kenilworth* had set the world mad about Queen Bess and the Earl of Leicester. "I intend," she says, writing at that date to her brother, "to collect all the notices I can of the manners of the age, the state of literature, arts, etc., which I shall interweave, as well as I am able, with the biographies of the Queen, and the other eminent characters of her time, binding all together with as slender a thread of political history as will serve to keep other matters in their places." So that the plagiarism of topic, if any, was the other way. Miss Aikin could not have been set on the track of Elizabethan gossip by any historical fiction of Walter Scott's, but Scott may have been induced by Miss Aikin's book to think of *Kenilworth* as a subject.

To the Memoir of Queen Elizabeth succeeded those of James I., in 1822, and of Charles I., in 1833. Miss Aikin felt no vocation for continuing her historical labours into the times of the Protectorate

and the Restoration. The stern aspect of the principles at issue seems to have frightened her from the first, the profligacy of the times from the last. Her long hesitation as to a subject suited to her taste and capacity finally resulted in her compiling the *Life of Addison*, which she published in 1843. This work was less successful than her former ones. Perhaps, as she herself seemed to suspect, the vigour and elasticity of her powers had been suffered to decay through leisure and delicate health, and the easily allowed interruptions of social life; and, not least, through the distractions of an age of busy thought and change, that test of true intellectual metal, when the stronger or the more dogmatic minds find stimulating material for thought and utterance, but those that are at once too feeble for self-support, and too wide for bigotry, are apt to subside into a hesitating but genial receptivity, interested in all aspects of life and history, but partly on that very account without those strong convictions or prepossessions which constitute the life of authorship. A severe review of this work by Macaulay, which appeared in the *Edinburgh*, must have given the finishing-touch to any lingering self-flattery of the authoress that her literary genius was still in bloom. Of this criticism, neither the editor of the Memoir, nor any of Miss Aikin's published letters, make any mention; but she never wrote again; and when she died in the January of last year, at the age of eighty-two, she had long stepped back from observation, and was missed only by those who knew her worth in private life, her warm family affection, her acute intelligence, her interest in the young, her pleasant conversation regarding times and people gone by.

And her acquaintance had been among the honoured of the earth. In London she had mixed in some of the best Whig society of the day. Mackintosh, Hallam, Rogers, Malthus, Sir H. Holland, are all names of more or less frequent occurrence in her letters; and under her modest roof at Hampstead, choice table-talk might often have been heard from men of literary and legal mark. Thither Whishaw, the lawyer, the friend of Lord Lansdowne, the somewhat Johnsonian oracle of his coterie, and Professor Smyth of Cambridge, often found their way to discuss with her the questions of the hour, or some interesting topic of history or belles-lettres; and a fourth in such re-unions would often be her valued friend and occasional correspondent, himself a resident at Hampstead, Mr. J. L.

Mallet, son of Mallet du Pan, the Genevese, whose political services to the French monarchy at the beginning of the first Revolution are matter of history. Both on his father's account and on his own, Mr. Mallet was well known to the Whig society of the day, and, though a man of retired habits, was a keen observer of passing events, and one whose judgment and courtesy gave his opinions great weight with all who possessed his acquaintance.* With friends such as these, whether on the field of politics or literature, the shrewd little hostess knew well how to bear her part in discussion: for in conversation she was practised and fluent; her memory was well stored; she was an able reasoner, an intelligent listener, and a pleasant retailer of anecdote.

The heyday of Miss Aikin's reputation chanced to fall during the stirring times of the Roman-Catholic Relief Bill and the Reform Bill, — times when Tories had begun to look gloomy, and Liberals in politics and education were radiant with joy for the good days coming. Her friends were almost exclusively among the Whig and Radical portion of the community; but her own opinions, or rather feelings — for she was fully inclined herself to make the distinction — did not go very far on the popular side. Nay, in some moods, her historical and antiquarian tastes seem half to have made a Tory of her.

"Women are natural aristocrats," she says in one of her letters; "and many a reproach have I sustained from my father for what he called my '*odi profanum vulgus*.' The rude manners, trenchant tone, and, barbarous slang of the ordinary Radicals, as well as the selfish ends and gross knavery which many of them strive to conceal under professions of zeal for all the best interests of mankind, are so inexpressibly disgusting to me, that in some moods I have wished to be divided from them far as pole from pole. On the other hand, the captivating manners of the aristocracy, the splendour which surrounds them, the taste for heraldry and pedigree which I have picked up in the course of my studies, and the flattering attentions which my writings have sometimes procured me from them, are strong bribes on the side of ancient privilege; but, as I said before, I have fought and conquered; and I confess that 'the greatest good of the greatest number' is what alone is entitled to consideration, however unpoetical the phrase and the pedantic sect of which it is the watchword." — P. 220.

* Some passages from a MS. Diary of Political Events, kept by Mr. J. L. Mallet, have been given to the public in the recent *Life of Sir James Graham*, by Torrens M'Cullagh.

This naïve confession of political faith occurs in a letter to Dr. Channing, the American sage, with whom, in her middle life, she entered on an epistolary correspondence which lasted for sixteen years, and her share of which constitutes by far the most interesting half of the present volume. It ranges over an agreeable variety of topics, — religion and politics, however, being the most prominent; and as one of the writer's main purposes was to keep Dr. Channing *au fait* of opinions and events in England, these letters are interesting, as reminding us of discussions long gone by, and of views and notions whose truth or importance time has since tested. But we see from them clearly that the age was marching too fast for Miss Aikin. The republican theories that were wafted back to her across the Atlantic, she was impelled at first by her devoted reverence for Dr. Channing to accept, harmonizing them as best she might with her national and personal prepossessions; but her mind got wearied and confused as newer and more advanced views of social and political matters opened up around her; and though too intelligent not to be interested by them, and too liberal by all the traditions of her life to wish to lag behind while others pressed on, it is very evident that she by no means relished on the whole the turn things were taking. Thus she complains of the influx of popular literature created by Lord Brougham's education movement, and regrets, almost as poignantly as S. T. Coleridge could have done, the declining taste for high philosophy and poetry. Of the agitation for women's rights she was eminently distrustful; and though at first she expresses herself cautiously on the subject, her condemnation of Harriet Martineau and her strong-minded proceedings, becomes, after a time, very pronounced. Though a Dissenter herself, and ready enough to join in party sneers at the Church of England, yet, when a question of action occurs, she evinces no destructive tendencies. In one way Dr. Channing's influence over her mind is very conspicuous. He was, like her, a Unitarian, but one of a much more spiritual tone and temper than had prevailed among the sectarians of Stoke-Newington. Brought up, as she had been, in a coterie where strictly utilitarian views of life prevailed, and accustomed to a somewhat contemptuous estimate of all mystic tendencies, Dr. Channing's exalted piety and personal sense of the unseen were to her as a new revelation of man's nature and requirements. Writing

to him in 1831, she pours out, with all the enthusiasm of female discipleship, her gratitude for the benefits which she was conscious of having derived from his teaching.

"I was never duly sensible," she says, "till your writings made me so, of the transcendent beauty and sublimity of Christian morals; nor did I submit my heart and temper to their chastening and meliorating influences. . . . Under the notion of a generous zeal for freedom, truth, and virtue, I cherished a set of prejudices and antipathies which placed beyond the pale of my charity not the few, but the many, the mass of my compatriots. I shudder now to think how good a hater I was in the days of my youth. Time and reflection, a wider range of acquaintance, and a calmer state of the public mind, mitigated by degrees my bigotry; but I really knew not what it was to open my heart to the human race until I had drunk deeply into the spirit of your writings.

"Neither was my intercourse with my Creator such as to satisfy fully the wants of the soul. I had doubts and scruples, as I have before intimated, respecting prayer, which weighed heavily on my spirit. In times of the most racking anxiety, the bitterest grief, I offered, I dared to offer, nothing but the folded arms of resignation — submission rather. So often had I heard, and from the lips of some whom I greatly respected, the axiom, as it was represented, that no evil could exist in the creation of a perfectly benevolent Being, if he were also omnipotent, that my reliance on Providence was dreadfully shaken by a vague notion of a system of things by which Deity itself was limited. How you have dispossessed me of this wretched idea I do not well know; but it is gone. I feel, I feel that He can and will bless me, even by means of what seem at present evil and suffering." — P. 243.

This was an education of the soul which may well have made Miss Aikin esteem Dr. Channing's influence as one of the memorabilia of her life. Still we cannot repress a smile sometimes at the truly feminine excess of laudation bestowed by this grateful disciple on her "guide, philosopher, and friend," as she entitles him, and are tempted to conclude that the excellent divine must have had a pretty strong digestion for the sugar-plums of friendship. She assures him of the impression his teaching is calculated to produce on *women* in particular, and tries to lure him to the neighbourhood of the English metropolis by an enumeration of the many distinguished admirers among her own sex he would find prepared to greet him there.

The home of Miss Aikin's middle life, from her father's death in 1822 to 1843, was at Hampstead, not then, as it is now, a

closely connected suburb of London, but a suburban village, having an independent life of its own, fed indeed more or less from the great metropolitan reservoir of intelligence and fashion, but still possessing its own organization, its own centres, and its own interests. Her description of Hampstead thirty years ago may have an interest for those who like to trace in local vicissitudes the working of that

"Ever-whirling wheel of change,
The which all mortal things doth way."

"Several circumstances," she writes in 1833, "render society here peculiarly easy and pleasant. In many respects the place unites the advantages, and escapes the evils, both of London and the provincial towns. It is near enough to allow its inhabitants to partake in the society, the amusements, and the accommodation of the capital, as freely as even the dissipated could desire; whilst it affords pure air, lovely scenery, and retired and beautiful walks; and because every one is supposed to have a London set of friends, neighbours do not think it necessary, as in the provinces, to force their acquaintance on you. Of local society you may have much, little, or none, as you please; and with a little, which is very good, you may associate on the easiest terms; then the summer brings an influx of Londoners, who are often genteel and agreeable people, and pleasingly vary the scene. Such is Hampstead." — P. 277.

Such was Hampstead; but the giant spread of population and building has worked a significant change within the limits of a generation. The heath, the groves, the fields, the gardens of Hampstead; its quaint red brick mansions of Stuart or Nassau date, its later brown and yellow edifices of Hanoverian respectability, its still more modern stone or plaster villas, with their well-kept lawns and dainty flower-beds; the variety of hill and valley, the broad breezy terrace, the out-look to the vast city and St. Paul's dome rising mysteriously through its everlasting smoke on the one side, and to Harrow on the Hill, with its conspicuous steeple, on the other; these, though not untouched by mutability's "cruel sport," may still in their general features remain as in the days when Miss Aikin tried to tempt Dr. Channing to its heights. But where is the free village life? where are the retired haunts? and above all, where are the familiar social gatherings equal in variety or in intellectual quality to those which certain Hampstead homes could muster five-and-thirty years ago? Memory tempts us; but we must not allow ourselves to dally at the banquets where wits and authors of every type and

degree of celebrity were wont to cluster round the head of the greatest publishing house in London; nor in the trim gardens, where noble and learned chiefs of the law would lounge in rustic ease under the hospitable auspices of their brother of the bench; nor in the modest retreat, where sons of science loved to assemble and hear lessons of experience from the greatest surgeon of the day. Before one quiet home only we would linger for a moment, one unpretending red brick house of ancient date, on the summit of the steep hill which lifts the visitor to the breezy table-land of the heath, and where Campbell, Rogers, Crabbe, Sotheby, Byron's wife and his daughter "Ada," Lord Jeffrey, John Richardson, nay, the Great Magician himself, were frequent guests; for Joanna Baillie, the inmate of that house, was one who stands out conspicuously in Miss Aikin's pages as an object of her love and reverence; and we are the more induced to make allusion to her here because she happens to furnish us, rather appositely, with a female type of that older cultivation, the cultivation of the Georgian era, or rather of the pre-Waterloo era, at which in our introductory remarks we glanced. Joanna Baillie was one of the numerous poetic nurslings whom "Caledonia, stern and wild," had the merit of fostering at the close of the last century; and though for more than half her life a resident in or near London, and familiar with its best society, she never bated her national prepossessions, nor lost the dialect of her fatherland. Her earliest years were led in all the freedom of Scottish country life. She was a fresh "out-door" maiden, scrambling barefoot over burns and heather, loving to listen to all nature's sounds, and to watch all nature's sights. It was not till her eleventh year that she could learn to read. Then her favorite studies were among the story-tellers and the poets; and her favorite thoughts as she grew up were of the workings and emotions of the human heart. Her first dramas were published in 1798; her last nearly forty years later. The altered taste of the age was evident in the different reception accorded to them. *De Montfort* and its companions ran out five editions within eight years. It was the reviving enthusiasm for Shakspeare and the drama generally that wafted Miss Baillie to notoriety. Her pure and beautiful language, her delicate pathos, her great command over a few chords in the complex harmonies of man's nature, were her well-merited title to the world's applause. Scott, who made her acquaintance in 1806, at

once found in her a congenial spirit, and, a time proved, an enduring friend. His letters to her, published in his *Life* by Lockhart, are well known to be among the most charming he ever wrote. Of her genius he was an ardent admirer, and was the means of first introducing her conceptions to the histrionic talent of Siddons in 1810, at Edinburgh, when he writes with delight of the tears and praises called forth by the representation of the *Family Legend*. But as acting pieces her plays were never permanently successful, and the dramas published in 1836, though full of real poetic power, and favoured with a good deal of laudatory criticism at the time, created none of the enthusiasm of former days in a reading public which had then turned to other fashions of literature for amusement. Miss Aikin's recollections of this gifted lady, written when she herself was old, are a very generous and pleasing tribute of friendship.

"It has been my privilege," she says, "to have had more or less of personal acquaintance with almost every literary woman of celebrity who adorned English society from the latter years of the last century nearly to the present time, and there was scarcely one of the number in whose society I did not find much to interest me; but of all these, excepting of course Mrs. Barbauld from the comparison, Joanna Baillie made by far the deepest impression upon me. Her genius was surpassing, her character the most endearing and exalted. . . . She was the only person I have ever known towards whom fifty years of close acquaintance, while they continually deepened my affection, wore away nothing of my reverence.

"So little was she fitted or disposed for intellectual display, that it was seldom that her genius shone out with its full lustre in conversation; but I have seen her powerful eye kindle with all a poet's fire, while her language rose for a few moments to the height of some 'great argument.' Her deep knowledge of the human heart also would at times break loose from the habitual cautiousness, and I have then thought that if she was not the most candid and benevolent, she would be one of the most formidable of observers. Nothing escaped her, and there was much humor in her quiet touches. . . .

"No one would ever have taken her for a married woman. An innocent and maiden grace still hovered over her to the end of her old age. It was one of her peculiar charms, and often brought to my mind the line addressed to the vowed Isabella in *Measure for Measure*, 'I hold you for a thing enskied and saintly.' If there were ever human creature 'pure in the last recesses of the soul,' it was surely this meek, this pious, this noble-minded, and nobly-gifted woman, who, after attaining her ninetieth year,* carried with her to the grave the love,

* Rather too advanced an estimate, we believe.

the reverence, the regrets of all who had ever enjoyed the privilege of her society."—Pp. 7, 11.

The description is a true one. We remember this sweet lady in her long evening of life. Her heart seemed wrapt in family affection, in household usefulness, in kindly interest for her friends, most tender always for the young and helpless. No picture of her is complete without that of her life-long companion and admiring elder sister, Agnes, the quaint, clever old lady, whose warm heart, shrewd sense of humour, and rich mines of legendary lore and national anecdote, helped in no small degree to fascinate the favoured guests at that fireside. We know nothing more delightful in domestic poetry of the realistic sort than the Birthday Lines which Joanna addressed to this faithful companion when both were advanced down the vale of life:—

"Dear Agnes, gleam'd with joy and dash'd with tears,

O'er us have glided almost sixty years
Since we on Bothwell's bonny braes were seen
By those whose eyes long closed in death have been,

Two tiny imps, who scarcely stoop'd to gather
The slender harebell on the purple heather;
No taller than the foxglove's spiky stem,
That dew of morning sheds with silvery gem.
Then every butterfly that cross'd our view
With joyful shout was greeted as it flew,
And moth, and lady-bird, and beetle bright,
In sheeny gold, were each a wondrous sight.
Then as we paddled barefoot, side by side,
Among the sunny shallows of the Clyde,
Minnows or spotted parr with twinkling fin
Swimming in mazy rings the pool within,
A thrill of gladness through our bosoms sent,
Seen in the power of early wonderment.
A long perspective to my mind appears,
Looking behind me to that line of years,
And yet through every stage I still can trace
Thy vision'd form, from childhood's morning

grace

To woman's early bloom, changing—how soon!—

To the expressive glow of woman's noon;
And now to what thou art, in comely age,
Active and ardent. Let what will engage
Thy present moment, whether hopeful seeds
In garden-plat thou sow, or noxious weeds
From the fair flower remove, or ancient lore
In chronicle or legend rare explore,
Or on the parlour hearth with kitten play,
Stroking its tabby sides, or take thy way
To gain with hasty steps some cottage door,
On helpful errand to the neighbouring poor,
Active and ardent, to my fancy's eye,
Thou still art young, in spite of days gone by.
Though oft of patience brief and temper keen,

Well may it please me, in life's latter scene,
To think what now thou art and long to me
hast been!"*

And Hampstead society, five-and-thirty years ago, presents us with another point of contact for the purposes of our present survey; for in the villa a few yards distant from the home of Joanna Baillie, a not unfrequent visitor, about the year 1830, was Caroline Frances Cornwallis, whose name, scarcely known to the world of authorship till the recent publication of her *Letters*, stands third on our list. She was daughter of the Rev. W. Cornwallis, rector of Wittersham in the county of Kent, representative of a younger branch of the ancient family which owned the late Marquis Cornwallis as its head. The literary career of this lady, and her expressed opinions, show in a striking manner the effect which the old-fashioned jealousy and distrust of female thinkers tended to produce on one assuredly of the most vigorous female intellects of her time; while she is herself also an eminent example of the increased depth and solidity of which a woman's thought was capable. Too earnest and profoundly sensitive to content herself with merely adapting her powers to the prevailing current of taste, too self-contained and retired in her circumstances, and perhaps in her inclinations, to be borne into public notice by the applauses of a coterie, Miss Cornwallis, in her isolated independence, read, thought, and wrote, with the powers of a masculine mind, on topics which few masculine minds could have handled with clearer logic or more sound information. But it was her firm conviction that a fairer consideration would be secured for her own productions by presenting them to the public on their own merits, without confessing the secret of her sex; and of the many who read and profited by the clever manuals entitled *Small Books on Great Subjects*, which appeared on Pickering's counters between the years 1842 and 1854, none, we venture to affirm, save the few chosen friends who were behind the scenes, had a suspicion that the author of nearly the whole series was a woman, and a woman, moreover, of secluded life, feeble health, and no influential literary connection. It was certainly not from any distrust of her own powers either as an individual or as a woman that Miss Cornwallis shrunk from publicity. One main motive of her intellectual exertions, as she

* Joanna Baillie died in 1851. Agnes survived her sister many years, and was believed to be upwards of a hundred when she died.

always asserted, was to vindicate the natural equality of her sex with the other; to prove, by what she considered irresistible logic, that if woman's intellect was not naturally inferior to that of man, the same rights were due to her in society, law, and politics; that if education only made the difference, then women ought to cast frivolity away, and be educated up to the level of men. This was indeed the cherished idea of her life; one to which she clung with all the pertinacity of an enthusiast. The "Rights of Women" were not thirty years ago the common battle-cry that they have since become. The few who made a stir about them were women of exceptional notoriety; flighty lecturers, like Frances Wright, or systematic radicals, like Harriet Martineau. Miss Cornwallis was a very different person from either of these. She was by education and taste a conservative in politics, and though, as life went on, her opinions on most subjects assumed a very liberal complexion, she always based them on a philosophic vantage-ground of her own, and to the last disliked the so-called reforming party in the State, and their political connections. How strongly she felt on this subject of woman's intellect and position the whole tenor of her correspondence bespeaks.

"Nothing distressed her more," says the editor of the volume before us, "than to be told (as of course she *was* told) that she was an exception, and that her own attainments afforded no argument in support of the opinion she so strenuously held upon the natural equality of intellect in the two sexes. She considered that women were themselves in great measure to blame for the prevalence of a state of opinion which cramped intellectual development and withheld civil rights; and hence she believed that every individual woman who showed herself capable of handling great and important questions was contributing something towards the future admission of the right of the whole sex to higher culture and greater freedom." Into the general argument on this delicate question it is no part of our business here to thrust ourselves. We would merely allude to one or two considerations which appear to us to have had too little weight in the reflections of Miss Cornwallis, and of others who share her views to their full extent. Even if woman's intellect could be proved, as satisfactorily as she thought it could, equal in natural capacity to that of man—to the triumphant refutation of Archbishop Whately's *dictum* about the exceptionally creative genius of the Miss Thwaites who invented

the soda-water—the question still remains, Would it be desirable, not on grounds of capacity—for capacity has really little to do with it; a clever woman is no doubt a better judge of most things than a stupid man—but on grounds of social harmony and expediency, that the legal fence-work between the sexes should be altogether levelled? For the distinctions upon which that fence-work rests, are not, be it remembered, arbitrary distinctions, as those between man and man; there are distinctions of nature's making, whereby the physical weakness of one sex points out its dependence on the physical strength of the other, and seems to bar the law of competition, save in exceptional cases. Again, to compare the "emancipation" of women with the emancipation of slaves, as an act of justice, is surely a fallacy in another respect. In the sphere of domestic influence, women may exercise, and always have exercised, a power of their own, to which slaves can never pretend; and the more highly they cultivate their reasoning powers, and the more widely they extend their knowledge, the more effective and beneficial may that influence become, though, unhappily, history shows that it has not always depended on such creditable causes. Nay, some might be disposed to cite against Miss Cornwallis her own favourite instance in plea of woman's enfranchisement, as proving that if she can do so much as an unobserved, irresponsible agent, there is the less need to drag her forth into the fields of public conflict.

"It is useless," she says, "to inquire what women have *published*, unless you could inquire also what they have *done privately which men have the credit of*. It was a chance that told us who was the composer of Pericles' Oration. She was reproached as the author of his policy also; yet his policy was most able. She raised her second husband to eminence also as an orator and politician; and it is probable that there has been many an Aspasia that the world knows nothing of, who has enjoyed in quiet the fame of him she loved, and cared not for her own."

Much of the peculiarity and independence of Miss Cornwallis's views and character is attributable to the circumstances of her life. She stood to a very great extent alone in the world. Her only sister married and died young, leaving her to be the sole companion of her parents as long as they lived, and afterwards the last survivor of her race. In after-years she gave a touching account of her early trials, and of the way in which they contributed to the formation of her character:—

"At the period you talk of, fifteen and sixteen, I was very miserable; a darling sister who, though much older, had been everything to me, married first, and left me lonely, and then, within the year, died; my father broke the tendon of his leg, and was helpless for six months; my mother's health was bad; myself worn with sorrow and fatigue. I learned not to weep, for it vexed my father to see it; but I have been told that the first time we, the survivors, appeared at church together, the parishioners almost wept to see us so pale, and worn, and shadow-like. What was the world to me then? I only thought of that where I should rejoice when I loved; and then I made the vow which long years afterwards I found written down, that I would forsake all the follies of my age, and be to my father all that she whom he had lost had been, for she was his right hand. I toiled patiently over his accounts, walked with him when he could walk, rode with him; sought no amusement, no dress; concealed my own grief under a gay exterior, and lived as if there had been no gayeties in the world. I plunged into books as a resource, and as a fountain whence I could draw refreshment for a weary spirit. . . . Thus bodily and mental suffering combined to make my youth unlike other people's. I think, nevertheless, if I had been thrown a little more into society, that my mind would not have broken down my body so much, and I might have felt less of that unnatural *tedium vite* which at times made it a burden almost too heavy to be borne." — Pp. 267, 268.

The mind which, at so early an age, could brace itself to such firm resolves, was assuredly of no common order. The extent and variety of her studies, as recorded in the correspondence for several succeeding years of her life, were something amazing. But while she liked to astonish her friends by the avowal of her multifarious excursions into the realms of knowledge, she protested against too high an estimate being formed of her conquests therein, and warmly deprecated the unenviable notoriety attaching to the character of a "learned lady."

"I believe," she wrote on one occasion, "you, like many more of my friends, overrate my attainments a good deal, owing to this fancy of mine for smatterings of knowledge. I think they afford more pleasure than swallowing down one great stiff science, horns and all, like the boa-constrictor, and lying choked with it for half one's life; but after all, for use they avail but little." — P. 57.

The *tedium vite*, however, was too formidable a ghost to be laid by study. Moreover, ill health interfered with her powers of application. There is something very pathetic in the following description of her mental state:—

"When health is only to be preserved by drawing lines of circumvallation past which sorrow is not allowed to step, it is hardly worth having. The effort to exclude the enemy wears more at last than his admission. . . . When I was stronger, I could smother care in extreme application to study: now even that remedy fails me. But why should I pursue such subjects? Bodily pain and mental suffering will some day have an end; and so I hitch up my load again, and proceed on my way."

Miss Cornwallis's devotion to learning, at an age when most girls seek the pleasures of dress and of the ball-room, did not altogether destroy her attractions for the sex of which she seemed likely to prove so formidable a rival on its own ground. It was not long after her sister's death that she received an offer of marriage from one destined afterwards to rank among the distinguished authors of his day, the historian J. C. L. Sismondi. Thirty-six years later, on occasion of his death, she thus mentions the circumstance to one of her correspondents:—

"This year is doomed not to be a gay one to me, for I have had the news of my dear old friend Sismondi's death—a friend more than for as long as I can remember, for I do not remember the first seeing him. Such a loss is irreparable, and as such I must feel it. He had greatness of mind to get over what few men do; for when disparity of years and other considerations led me to decline his proffered hand, he continued the same warm friend as ever, and never, to his latest hour, ceased to show me every kindness in his power. Such a friend is not easily replaced, and can never be forgotten. He is one more added to the list of those whose number makes me feel more a denizen of the next world than of this. My only comfort is the trying to make myself worthy of them, that in God's good time I may be found fit to enjoy the society of 'just men made perfect;' and in this hope I trudge on upon my weary pilgrimage patiently and quietly." — P. 233.

A letter of the rejected suitor's on the occasion, which has been preserved, written in imperfect English, shows how highly he rated the mental excellences of his beloved:

"Tell her," he wrote to Mrs. Cornwallis, "tell her I will work incessantly till I have reached such a reputation as she may derive some vanity from my past address, while always shall I be proud of having raised my wishes to her, though unsuccessfully. . . . Do not think the wish unreasonable, however. Those dreams are now vanished; but the more aerial was their nature, the more have they left after them a true endearment for yourself and your daughter. She cannot be a foreigner to me; it was not *she* who has refused me, it was the war,

—the distance of seas and lands, the nature itself of things. She has not refused me for a friend, a half-brother, and that I hope to remain."

Disparity of years he does not himself reckon among the causes of her refusal; and seeing he was but thirteen years older than herself, this was probably a very minor consideration. But her resolute devotion to her parents at this time has already been noticed, and no doubt the idea of a foreign connection was altogether repugnant to her feelings. The friendship between Sismondi and herself was kept up by a frequent epistolary correspondence. Her own letters to the historian seem not to be extant; but many of those which he wrote to her are given, as an appendix, in the present volume. They range freely over various topics of literature and sentiment, often expressing opinions very opposite to those she entertained, yet everywhere evincing his profound respect for her character and attainments, and a spirit of tender solicitude for her welfare.

In 1822 Mr. Cornwallis was compelled to leave Wittersham on account of disaffection among his parishioners, which took the shape of personal insult and ill-treatment. He had spent many years of earnest self-denying labour in the parish, and his daughter had seconded his efforts for its welfare with all the zeal of her ardent nature, and had even voluntarily relinquished a considerable portion of the inheritance which would have been eventually hers, in the endowment of a school for its poorer inhabitants. The removal from Wittersham, and its cause, rankled deeply in her heart, and did not make her more in charity with the growth of democratic principles in the country at large. In after-times, when writing to a friend on the subject of certain attacks on the clergy in which the *Examiner* newspaper had been indulging, she thus points with the sting of personal recollection her indignant defence of the class of which her father had been a member:—

"There is no man who spends his time in more anxious exertion than a conscientious clergyman. There is no fame, no reward to spur him on, for his preferment comes before his duty. He spends his life in a country village perhaps, or at any rate wherever he may be cast, without a chance or an expectation of any further emolument; and what he has is generally a modicum which requires economy to live on it and appear like a gentleman. His duties lie among the poor and the sick, whom he has to instruct and comfort; with the rich he must mix as their equal, and by his example and

conduct mend them if he can; and this must be done silently and quietly, or it is unavailing. A man who has thus given up his life to his fellow-creatures hopes, perhaps—it is human to do so—that some approbation, some esteem from his fellow-men as well as his God, may follow his honest and noiseless course; and he finds himself stigmatized—as indeed his great Master was before him—'as a glutton and a wine-bibber,' a grasping, avaricious being, who cares not who suffers if he be enriched. Is it not the way to make men worthless if they are allowed no sort of credit for their virtues? I knew one on whom all this vituperation was heaped till his gray head was bent in sorrow to the grave; yet his youth had been innocent, his manhood spent in ministering to all the wants and woes of his poor neighbours; his old age was hunted down by the Cobbetites, and such as Mr. Fonblanque would set on if he could. He was carried to his grave in the place which had been the scene of his quiet and useful life, and then the delusion was over. A weeping population rushed forth to meet the last remains of the man whose worth they then knew, *when they had lost him!* I only wish Mr. F. had been there to see it."—Pp. 211, 212.

The mortification and distress she experienced at this epoch, together with other causes, seem to have had a serious effect on her already very delicate health. After struggling with severe illness for some time, she resolved on trying the effect of a winter abroad, and accepted the offer of her faithful friend Sismondi to place at her disposal a country-house belonging to himself in the neighbourhood of Pescia.

Her Italian life was a new experience of existence to Miss Cornwallis. She was now forty years of age; her mind was cultivated up to the highest pitch; her memory stored with facts and ideas; her imagination open to every new impression from without; her eagerness for knowledge insatiable. To one so circumstanced, the elemental glow of a southern climate—which soothes the fibres and braces the nervous system long depressed by the chill damps of the north, and by the gnawings of mental and bodily pain—works like inspiration itself. Every new object, every unaccustomed sound, the little traits of domestic life, the living accents of a language hitherto only known in books, the realization of scenes viewed as yet only by picture or description, the awaking each morning to the anticipation of unwonted impressions, the reviewing at evening a new treasure of ideas and sympathies,—all this, blended with the unusual sense of physical ease and elasticity, seems to expand the limits of the soul, and endue it with heightened life and power. Long years afterwards Miss Cornwallis used to

revert to her Italian life as the happiest period of her existence. Her letters are more genial, more playful, more self-forgetting at this time than at any other; while her remarks on Italian life and manners evince a spirit of observation singularly keen and discriminating, and a vivid feeling for the picturesque in life and nature. She remained in Italy a year and a half on this occasion. Subsequently, in 1829-30, she spent another winter there.

During Miss Cornwallis's first absence in Italy her father died. Mrs. Cornwallis survived till 1836. She was a woman, to judge from the eulogiums of Sismondi, as well as from the recollections of surviving friends, of considerable personal attractions, and no ordinary powers of mind. But in religious matters she inclined to the strictest sect of the Evangelicals; and from the views of this party her daughter totally and most emphatically dissented.

Miss Cornwallis continued to reside in her native county of Kent all the remainder of her life, which, in spite of frequent and alarming attacks of illness and pain, was protracted to the age of seventy-one. She mixed little in general society; but she took delight in forming the minds of younger people, and doing her best to shame her own sex, more especially, out of the frivolities with which the female character is liable to be beset. And her warm and generous interest in the welfare of her self-chosen pupils seems to have been requited with no ordinary strength of attachment on their part. Her older friends and correspondents, with the exception of Sismondi and John Hookham Frere,* were not, as far as we can find, people of high literary note. Her opinions were her own, the fruit of vast reading, close thought, and perhaps, we may add, of too little argument with those who were her equals or superiors in attainment. Her old friend Sismondi, however, was wont to express his dissent from her conclusions pretty freely; and even when the adjustment of woman's true position in the world was the subject of discussion, did not allow his deference for Miss Cornwallis, nor his appreciation of her high capacities, to modify his conclusions as to the female type of character in general.

"The qualities of the heart," he says, "are those by which above all others you have the advantage over us. . . . Called on your part to give being to men, I ascribe very little

importance to the truth or falsity of the scientific notions you may implant in them during their first years: I ascribe infinite importance to the sentiments you may develop in them. God preserve the children of mothers who would fain be men! For such there would be no more youth, no more enthusiasm, no more self-devotion, perhaps no more compassion." *

Another subject which she had much at heart, and on which also Sismondi differed from her, was her theory of Christianity. Her grand panacea for remedying the sins and follies of the age was the combination of religion with philosophy,—the establishing the conviction that divine revelation was simply and solely an authoritative enforcement of those moral truths which reason, under the most favourable circumstances, might discover for itself; of which, at all events, when presented to its contemplation in the teaching of Scripture, it was the sole and sufficient test. All theological dogmas which could not be meted to the requirements of man's natural conscience and understanding, she held to be the after-growth of human invention, superinduced upon the pure theology of the first two centuries. For, in the ante-Nicene Fathers and Apologists, in the lives and deaths of a Polycarp, a Justin, a Clement, and a Tertullin, in their simple profession of devotion to the person and example of the Saviour, unaccompanied by any doctrinal statements as to the mode and conditions of salvation, she believed the only reliable interpretations of Christ's mission were to be recognized. She did not admit the supposition that a subsequent necessity for doctrinal statement might arise out of the wayward, often vicious, misrepresentations of men; that as the echoes of the first Christian teachers faded from men's ears, and the first love began to wax cold, some safeguards might be needed to prevent religion from degenerating, under the influence of sensual prepossessions or capricious fancies, into wild superstition or wilder Antinomianism.

Sismondi, in replying to his friend's argument on behalf of primitive Christianity, thus eloquently maintains the superior excellence and beauty of some of its later developments, and sees, in its varied adapta-

* "Les qualités du cœur sont celles par lesquelles avant toutes les autres vous l'emportez sur nous. . . . Appelez pour votre part à faire des hommes, je ne mets que fort peu d'importance aux notions vraies ou fausses de science que vous pourriez planter en eux durant leurs premières années; j'en mets une infinie aux sentiments que vous développez en eux. Dieu garde les enfans de mères qui seroient hommes; il n'y auroit plus de jeunesse pour eux, plus d'enthousiasme, plus de dévouement, peut-être plus de pitié."

* There are no letters in the "Selections" to J. H. Frere himself, but many to his sister and others of his family, and several references to his conversation and opinions on literary subjects.

tion to the requirements of mankind at different periods and under different aspects of civilization, the most convincing proof of its divine authority. He writes in February, 1840:—

"I would look for Christianity rather in what it has become than in what it was at its origin. Whatever may have been those revelations and that divinity over which the long course of ages and the influence of human passions have spread a veil, Christianity is the richer by all the pious meditations, all the researches into the human heart, all the purest and most beautiful sentiments with which the love of God has inspired man during successive centuries, and by all the experience afforded by times of prosperity and adversity, of barbarism and of civilization. Such as it is preached in the purest of the Reformed Churches, Christianity is the finest embodiment of doctrines and moral teaching which exists. It is there that I love to contemplate it, and that, like all things intrusted to men by God, I hope and believe it will attain still greater development and perfection. Whilst all the endeavors we make to return backwards, to seize hold of it in monuments which themselves have not been exempt from alteration, and which each succeeding age changes more and more by its own interpretations, seem to me to have no other effect than that of diminishing its beauty and its utility."*

Always eager in the pursuit of truth, Miss Cornwallis hailed with vivid interest the first utterances of that school of Biblical Criticism which students of German theology were beginning to extend into England, and of which Dean Milman's History of the Jews was, we believe, the earliest sample in a popular style laid before the British public. This certainly implied no small courage, and a very rare spirit of investigation in a woman, and one brought up, be it remembered, not like Miss Aikin in a school of latitudinarian Dissent,

* "Je vais chercher le Christianisme plutôt dans ce qu'il est devenu que dans ce qu'il étoit à son origine. Quelles qu'aient été les révélations et la divinité sur lesquelles le long cours des âges et l'influence des passions humaines ont étendu un voile, le Christianisme s'est enrichi de toutes les méditations pieuses, de toutes les études sur le cœur humain, de tout ce que l'amour de la divinité a inspiré aux hommes de plus beau et de plus pur, pendant une longue suite de siècles, et avec toute l'expérience que donnent des tems de prospérité et d'adversité, de barbarie, et de civilisation. Tel qu'il est prêché dans les églises réformées les plus pures, il est le plus beau corps de doctrines et d'enseignement moral qui existe. C'est là que j'aime à le voir, et que comme toutes les choses confiées aux hommes par la divinité, j'espère et je crois qu'il se développera et se perfectionnera encore. Tandis que tous les efforts qu'on fait pour retourner en arrière, pour le saisir dans des monuments qui n'ont point été exempts d'altération, et que chaque siècle a changé et change encore par ses interprétations, me semble n'avoir d'autre effet que de lui ôter de sa beauté et de son utilité."—Pp. 480, 481.

but in a strictly evangelical and otherwise orthodox world of opinion, and herself craving for the confirmation and assurance of that religious faith which was often the only thing that saved her morbid temperament from despondency. But where truth led, or seemed to lead, she never shrank from following, nor was she one who could ever rest content with half convictions on so momentous a subject. Though her strong belief in the person and character of Christ, as portrayed in the Gospels, rendered her proof against the seductions of Strauss's theory, the conclusions of Ewald and Bunsen met in great measure with her cordial assent; and at a time when they were little talked of in England, we find her already familiar with those aspects of Neology which have since introduced terror and division into the English Church; have made old foes draw together in the dread of a common danger, and have been made a cause of opprobrium, often misplaced and excessive, for the impugners, in whatever degree, of traditional orthodoxy. But then, again, with the odd eclecticism which she managed to preserve in her opinions, she combined this latitudinarianism as to doctrine with High-Church leanings in ecclesiastical matters, and seems even to have thought there was divine sanction for the doctrine of apostolic succession. "By principle and rational conviction of the advantage," she writes, "I am an Episcopalian. I believe it was the order of government established, if not by Christ himself, at least by his immediate successors; and I do not feel satisfied that we have the same claims to his promises, as attached to the sacraments, when administered by unauthorized persons, save when Episcopal ordination has been unattainable."

She objected to Dissent on moral grounds also, as tending to weaken the sense of brotherhood among Christians; while for the same reason, as we have seen, she would have levelled the outworks of formula which tend to isolate the National Church from so large a proportion of the nation itself. It is a little curious, in a correspondence which turns so much upon religious topics, and is carried on through the whole period of the Tractarian movement, to find so little reference to that particular conflict of views which was for many years by far the most stirring episode in the history of our Church, and of which Miss Aikin's gossiping letters to Dr. Channing are continually relating, superficially enough, the progress and purport. Miss Cornwallis's discussions, indeed, seem to fit in to the polemics of our present time far more than into the prevailing polemics

of the days to which they belong. The fact seems to be that the questions as between the Evangelical party and the Puseyites, or between the "high and dry" and the Puseyites, or even as between the "Broad Church" of Arnold and Whately and the Puseyites, had comparatively little interest for her. Her opinions pointed to a different stage of liberalism from that of any parties to this particular strife.

Even those most inclined to condemn her sceptical audacity on doctrinal points cannot deny that her convictions were honest, and her religious feelings very fervent and sincere. "God knows," she said in 1846, when speaking of the series of books she was then publishing, "I never put pen to paper on these momentous subjects without bending in humble prayer that I might be guided myself, and be enabled to guide others, to that true wisdom, without which all learning is but as sounding brass."

There was another subject on which Miss Cornwallis held strong opinions at variance with those commonly received. One of her *Small Books* was on "Man's Power over Himself to Prevent or Control Insanity." So impressed was she with the belief that such control was possible, that she strongly objected to the legislation which is based on the assumption of the madman's irresponsibility; and in the hot arguments which in conversation she would maintain on this point, she used, as we have heard, to adduce herself as an instance of the power of self-restraint. But for the exercise of strong resolution, she said, she was firmly convinced she should more than once have lost the balance of her mind.

The morbid tendency which this confession indicates was no doubt the secret of much unhappiness, as well as of her sometimes wayward talent and temper. She is described, by those who remember her personal appearance, as tall and largely built, with marked features, a sarcastic expression of countenance, and a decided manner. Her heart was benevolent and quick to feel for suffering and distress, and she concealed beneath a rugged surface a most feminine yearning for sympathy and affection. Generous and warm-hearted, incapable of meanness or hypocrisy herself, impatient of doubt or compromise, she made little allowance for the shortcomings or hesitation of others; nor could she placidly recognize in the moral constitution of the world that interweaving of truth with error, that complexity in the "colours of good and evil," which from of old has baffled the wisest philosophy of man, and which revelation itself does not

profess to explain. The struggle to carry reason's powers beyond their allotted province cost her, as she confesses, hours of agony. There is something very touching in her admission of defeat, and in her strong assertion of the religious faith which, whatever its exact texture or hue may have been, kept her from despair; nay, more than that, animated her to the last moment of her life with sincere trust in a world to come, and a longing desire to better the condition of her fellow-creatures in this.

"The childlike confidence with which, when all else that we had thought stable fails us, we throw ourselves on that great Power whose existence and attributes become clearer the more all other things appear uncertain, is surely the frame of mind which our Saviour inculcated, and which is most becoming the creature of his will; and to this frame of mind I truly believe that the most decided scepticism does lead. Human passions are roused in the progress of controversy, and ridicule is resorted to when we are angered by opposition or wearied by folly; but I believe that in the silence of his chamber the man becomes again the creature, feels his own bounded powers, and throws himself with the utmost prostration of spirit at the feet of that Power in whose hands he feels that he is."
—P. 168.

"It is easy to write or to say with our Articles, that God is 'without parts or passions;' but to feel it, is, I am well convinced, the most difficult task our nature has; and the way in which my own health sinks under the stretch of mind occasioned by such contemplation, shows that God has been merciful in giving us more tangible objects to lay hold on. So convinced, indeed, am I that it is impossible to be well with such things always in one's head, that I would abandon these studies if I could, and plunge into active life, satisfied to do my duty as well as I could, and leave the rest to God's mercy. But in utter loneliness the mind turns inward to search into its own nature and prospects; and this research shakes the mortal case shrewdly. Few can comprehend this, and I, who feel it, can hardly describe; but I certainly feel that those who eat largely of the tree of knowledge will surely die, and that soon. . . . I sometimes doubt if my course of study and thinking affords happiness; gratification of no ordinary kind attends it sometimes, but it is only sometimes, and there are many hours of weariness, when the exhausted mind lies prostrate under the painful sense of its own littleness. . . . I am not a bit well; head aching continually, and every breath of wind makes me shiver, but the sword has worn out the scabbard, and it is too late now to mend it, so I must go on as I can. I could find in my heart to do as I did once when a child, and sit down by my bedside and cry, nobody could tell why. I got a dose of physic for my pains then, and it cured me of crying forever; but I should fancy my brains

were none the better for that force done to nature, and I rather envy those who can open their eye-slucies and let off a little of that 'perilous stuff' which weighs upon the heart.'—P. 169.

She said herself, that the gloom of the soul was never so deep with her after her experience of life in Italy, as before she "broke prison;" and that the sense of happiness she was then conscious of, as proving to her that happiness was at least a possibility, prevented her from being ever again overwhelmed by the sense of present *ennui*. Still, existence had no charms to make her love it; and every access of sickness seems to have been welcomed by her in the hope that it might prove a dismissal from the world and its perplexities.

To one of her friends she begins a letter thus, in 1841:—

"The glow is bright in the evening sky,
And the evening star is fair;
The buds are breaking,
The flowers are waking,
And sweet is the fresh spring air.

"But there is a brighter glow to come,
And an hour more fair than this;
When, though friends are weeping,
The body lies sleeping,
And the spirit breathes free in bliss.

"This may be a sort of answer to your inquiries, my dearest Anna, for I would not that you should hear of illness in any other tone. . . . I begin to feel the confident hope that my affairs with this world are drawing to a close. How happy this hope has made me I cannot make you comprehend; but at no moment of my life do I recollect to have felt so exhilarated."—P. 228.

And again, a year or two after, when the breaking of an abscess on the lungs had brought her very near the grave:—

"I cannot, things being as they are, entertain any very great expectation of recovery, though I do not say that it is impossible. Now I am so far revived that I can write, propped up with pillows, in my easy-chair. But, as I have said already, it is in the hands of God; and if an easy mind and pleasure in the thought, rather than dread of death, can keep fever down, and give the constitution a chance of rallying, why, I have that chance. . . . If death comes, I shall receive it as a boon and a blessing; if not, I shall brace myself again for my pilgrimage, and see how much more I can do that may be useful whilst I stay here."—P. 247.

Poetical composition was one of her re-

sources, especially in those moods of depression to which she so often alludes. The verses printed in this volume are almost all of a sombre, melancholy cast. They have reference chiefly to personal emotion, and evince reflection and sensibility rather than high imaginative power. Among them are many translations from German, a language in which she became a proficient long before it was usual to find English ladies at all acquainted with it. But not only was Miss Cornwallis familiar with what we now call the ordinary modern tongues, she was skilled also in the dead languages, Hebrew as well as Latin and Greek; and not only was she well read in the philosophy, poetry, and history of all cultivated ages, but she was versed likewise in many abstruse sciences. When in Italy she made a study of Medicine and Anatomy. Chemistry, and the phenomena of Electricity, occupied much of her attention. Yet with all this she was an adept in woman's accomplishments too; was a skilful musician, both vocal and instrumental; could paint in water-colours, and draw caricatures; could model in wax, and sometimes even, like Mrs Carter, condescend to make a cap or pudding.* Ignorance, whether in man or woman, was, in her estimation, as she was never tired of enforcing, the great bane of human existence, and intellectual progress the one sure road to moral happiness and improvement.

From the time she conceived the idea of publishing the *Small Books*, her reading and writing ardour became hotter than ever. It was indeed no child's play to condense and popularize the lessons of philosophy and science, not into the form of mere manuals for reference, but into treatises calling out and suggesting the higher functions of generalization with reference to the moral and spiritual dispensations of creative wisdom.

"Now I will tell you what I have been about," she writes to one of her coadjutors in 1843. "In the first place, I got up Chemistry, of which I did not know a great deal before, and wrote the 'Introduction to Practical Organic Chemistry'; then came the table of a Lecture on Insanity, . . . and this required no small research; and this is nearly done. And then I have been reading for one tract on Greek Philosophy, and have got through about two sheets of that, at odd times working at the Greek language, and so I have

* We write some of these personal particulars from the recollections of friends, for the published volume of her letters gives but scant information of the biographical sort.

taken an Oration of Demosthenes to put into literal English, and back again into Greek; besides which I have been reading and theorizing about *Æschylus' Prometheus Vincit*, with Cudworth's *Intellectual System*, and Brucker's *History of Philosophy*, and Diogenes Laertius and Athenagoras, for the Orphic Theology. Now, if ever one might be excused for not writing to one's friends under a press of business, I think I have that excuse to offer. . . . In the midst of this I have been quite happy and well; not a moment, even at meal times, was unemployed; my books, paper, and pens were beside me, and I ate with my left hand, and wrote with my right, and never even thought whether I was alone. I think that this is the secret of being happy—the having always some engrossing subject to occupy the mind.”—P. 237.

The works by which Miss Cornwallis has established her claim to a dignified place in the ranks of female authorship are “*Pericles, a Tale of Athens in the 83d Olympiad*,” of which Dr. Hawtrey, the late Head Master and Provost of Eton, said he had “never met with any work of fiction on a classical subject which united so much valuable information to so interesting a story;” fifteen entirely, and four more partially, of the *Small Books on Great Subjects*, embracing the topics of Physiology, Metaphysics, Jurisprudence, Chemistry, Greek Philosophy, Grammar, History, and Social Science; a Prize Essay on Juvenile Delinquency, published by Smith and Elder in 1853; five articles contributed to the *Westminster Review*, on social and other subjects; and one or two to *Fraser's Magazine*, on Naval Education.

The *Small Books* were received with great favour at the time of their publication, both in England and in America. Second and third editions were called for; “and,” says the editor of Miss Cornwallis's letters, “it was in a spirit of triumph in which no mean or personal feeling had place, that she delighted to remark how ‘through the long series no hostile criticism had discovered a misrepresentation or a mistake.’” In those of her books which treated of the history of Christianity, her method was to dwell with emphasis on the simple affirmations to which she firmly held, but not to provoke controversy or shock prejudice by drawing conclusions, which, she nevertheless believed, congenial readers would not fail to discover for themselves. So it was, that, with few exceptions, the critics of the press passed by the element of “unsoundness,” and united in praising the learning, the impartiality, the good sense, and the liberality of the unknown author. Her own

consciousness, however, that many of her convictions were at variance with the opinions of the world around her, on points on which opinion is peculiarly sensitive, and the dislike of giving offence on the one hand, or of hearing her views scoffed at as a mere woman's notions on the other, kept her firm in the resolution of concealing her authorship as long as she should live. But she left with her editor—one of her attached female disciples, as we believe, and the domestic companion of her later years—the charge of lifting the veil after her death, and making known any particulars of her literary life and correspondence that might have an interest for the public at large. We cannot but wish this charge had been carried out a little more fully; that a few more particulars, at least, had been given as to the society in which Miss Cornwallis mixed, and the means which she possessed for acquiring that very wide and varied knowledge which was the cherished delight of her life. In the earlier portion of the correspondence, we hear of mornings spent in reading at the British Museum, but there is no distinct record of any residence in the metropolis. Her letters are all dated from the country; almost all from her quiet homes in Kent. A slight connection and old hereditary friendship with the family of John Hookham Frere, the accomplished author of *Whistcraft*, and friend of Canning, afforded her, as it would seem, some of the pleasantest opportunities of enjoying varied intellectual converse. At one time of her life, she was, as we have before said, a not unfrequent guest at Hampstead, where one of Mr. Frere's brothers had his home: and here she met many cultivated and distinguished men; among others, S. T. Coleridge, who, as she records, sat by her at dinner on one occasion, and charmed her by his conversation. He talked of the sense of immortality in man, and of its universality, which, in his opinion, caused it to partake of the nature of what we call instinct in animals. “‘The only time I ever saw Lord Byron,’ he said, ‘he pointed to a man in a state of brutal intoxication, and asked if I thought that a proof of an immortal nature.’ ‘Your inquiry, my Lord, is,’ I answered; and so it was; it was the natural instinct shrinking with abhorrence from the degradation of the soul.”

“Such conversation,” adds Miss Cornwallis, “at a dinner party is not common, and I was much pleased with my place.”—P. 49.

Miss Cornwallis died in January, 1858. The published correspondence ends in No-

vember, 1856, and we have no record of the concluding period of her life; but from the list of her writings it appears that her pen was active up to within a few months of her decease, and that one of the latest subjects that occupied her was the reform of the laws respecting the property of married women, which she had the satisfaction of seeing carried through both Houses of Parliament the year before she died.

And here we must claim a moment's pause for a comparison, which the recent publication of a supplemental volume of the letters of Eugénie de Guérin has suggested to us, between two female intellects of the nineteenth century, the one of the English Protestant, the other of the French Romanist type. We lay stress upon the first term in this qualification, for it is evident to us that national as well as ecclesiastical influences had their share in the mental development of each of these gifted ladies. In Caroline Cornwallis we see Protestantism resolving itself into Rationalism; in Eugénie de Guérin we see Catholicism tending to Mysticism; yet, even with the uncompromising appeal to reason as the *verifying faculty* which limited Miss Cornwallis's theoretical faith, we still discern the workings of that deep sense of unseen realities, which, amid all varieties of belief and disbelief, has ever been found brooding over the Teutonic mind, and enduing the contemplative, often gloomy intellect of the North with its highest model of imagination; while the pious meditations of the French lady are woven over the framework of a refined sentimentality, which, under other inspiration, might have afforded garniture for a novel of Balzac or George Sand. The earthly love and tenderness for friends, brother, home, and nature, in which Eugénie's soul was steeped, mingled with and led on to her devout life-consecration to a Higher Power. She felt the sense of bliss to consist in close-confidence and self-abnegation; and for the full contentment of such yearnings as hers she could find no satisfying object save such as dogmatic Christian doctrine afforded her. She knew no impulse for questioning or searching into the grounds of things. Her gentle marvel into life's mysteries was easily quelled by the dictates of faith; and she was content to accept her Church's view of what religion is, and to see beauty in all its forms, though, with her innate purity and elevation of soul, it was its spirit and not its form to which she really clung. Those portions of Mlle. de Guérin's writings which do not derive their whole interest from the self-

communings of her faith and love charm us chiefly by the minute and graphic touches of life and nature with which they abound. But in her small details there is no attempt at philosophy or generalization, no quickness to probe, no restless desire to remedy the evils of a world immersed in sin and error. She writes of the things and persons around her with the taste and discrimination, but also with something of the gossiping minuteness, of a De Sévigné. And her personal appearance, slight, pale, fragile, insignificant but for dark intelligent eyes and a bright smile which sometimes illumined the pensiveness of her countenance, how different is this, too, from the outward aspect which we have heard ascribed to the English lady philosopher! Family affections and a sense of duty kept Eugénie de Guérin in the world, but natural inclination would have consigned her to a cloister. Miss Cornwallis, as we have had occasion to remark, was repelled from the amenities of social intercourse by the angularity of her own nature, by dislike of notoriety as a "learned lady," and by the want of natural objects for her softer affections; certainly not from the sense that the soul's perfection could best be attained by reclus meditation. On this subject hear her emphatic protest against the pietism of Wilberforce:

"Wilberforce mistook his road (led away by the speciousness of the religious party he attached himself to), and strove to 'meditate' when he ought to have *thought*. He wasted precious time in writing down good resolutions and self-reproaches for doing less than he ought, yet seems to have overlooked the fact that all his writing and meditation was the cause of his doing little. *Thought*, happily for us, is very rapid; and if we were really determined to think when we ought to do so, with the full powers of our reason, five minutes would generally despatch the business, and well too; for the mind, already well stored with knowledge and accustomed to close application, can bring its powers to bear on any given subject at a moment's notice with thorough effect. To set apart *hours* for thinking is mere indolence, and has much the same effect on the mind that a diet of weak broth would have on the body: it enfeebles and unfits it for any vigorous effort. At fifty-two, Wilberforce complains that his memory is failing. He himself attributes it to having suffered his thoughts to be too desultory, and I have no doubt he was right; his water-gate 'meditations' had taken from him the power of grasping rapidly and firmly the objects brought before him; for I have invariably seen among my acquaintance that the powers of the mind failed the earliest in those who applied the least." — P. 197.

And here our remarks draw to an end.

It so happens that the three clever women with whose memorials we have been occupying ourselves take up their position respectively in the three departments into which the genius of ages and the genius of individuals are said to be alike distributable. Poetry, Narrative, and Philosophy, or Science, have been by turns the favourite forms of human thought since men began to think. In the present century, they would seem to have each come in for their share in giving the prevalent direction to the public taste. The quality of imagination was certainly predominant in the days to which Joanna Baillie properly belonged, the day of the great minstrels—of Scott, Byron, Campbell, Southey. It was at History's shrine that Lucy Aikin paid her devotions, in company with, at however respectful a distance, Hallam, Mackintosh, and Sismondi. Philosophy claimed Caro-

line Cornwallis as her own,—the critical philosophy which the new impulses of the time had brought from the German universities, and which is making its familiar home in the minds of the present generation. All honour be to the triad! They had neither of them cause to be ashamed of the place assigned to their productions on the shelves of contemporary literature. With whatever differences of taste or ability, they each in their several way helped to vindicate woman's right to the franchise of the human intellect, and have afforded man opportunity to show that the old days of jealousy and derisive compliment are at an end, and that the pretensions of a *précieuse ridicule* would be as unmeaning in this latter half of the nineteenth century as were the fantastic pedantries of La Mancha's knight among the working-day realities of the age of Cervantes.

THE SELF-ACCUSING NATURE OF CRIME. — We are so constituted, that although external circumstance may conspire to conceal our crime, yet retribution commences immediately after its commission. No sooner has the murderer accomplished his fell purpose than the agonies of an aroused accusing conscience begin to torment him. Sleep forsakes his eyelids, the darkness of the night is peopled with horrible phantoms. They crowd around his pillow, and shriek the name of his dark crime into his ear. Daylight brings no relief, for though he go forth into the busy world, and mingle with the bustling crowds of his fellow-men; though he try to lose himself in the distraction of guilt; yet in all its scenes the phantom is at his elbow, gazing at him with its hollow eyes, appalling him with its speechless accusations, and high above the noise of many voices, the strains of music, the roar of cannon, or the peal of thunder, the death-shriek of his victim rings through his soul, for the powers of nature as well as the hand of man are alike directed against him as against one common enemy. What a fallacy is crime, seeing that it makes a brave man fear life more than death! And not only is this self-inflicting retribution attendant upon murder, the highest of all crimes, but in a proportionate degree it accompanies every infringement of the moral law. We may commit crime without detection, but we can no more commit crime without punishment than we can infuse poison into the blood without injury. It is one of the most subtle workings of our internal constitution, and is in strict keeping with the analogies of nature. We expose our physical constitutions to the action of forces inimical to it, whether of damp, cold, or heat, and we suffer accordingly; and if we

expose our moral constitution to the action of crime, we must entail upon ourselves, as an inevitable consequence, the punishment of an avenging conscience—a moral palsy, a wounded self-respect, a loss of that conscious rectitude which can alone make a man decisive in action, bold in danger, and generous and good in all things. Take a case in point. There is a man who has broken the laws of his country, has stolen, perjured, or forged; the vengeance of social justice overtakes him, he is deprived of the rights of citizenship, and confined in prison, whence, after an assigned period, he comes out, and we say his punishment is over;—it is not so, his punishment is going on within, and will probably go on as long as he lives. He has lost caste, has stabbed his self-respect; henceforth he will never feel the proud integrity amongst his fellow-men; there is a foul brand on his forehead, a felon-feeling in his heart, which will make his lips falter when he pronounces the words of probity and honour, for they will fall from him like lies. Society may welcome him back, may honour him with her most distinguished gifts; but in vain; he will drag the fetid carcass of his moral life through all the world's fairest scenes, and though men may bow before him, yet the applause of honesty will be his most bitter reproof, for to himself he will always be a lost, ruined man. Such is the terrible price of the departure from rectitude. Human law may assign punishment, but it cannot atone for the loss of that feeling of spotless honour, that consciousness of innocence, which, once gone, can never be regained, and that whispering of the accusing self which will blight the fairest life and blast the happiest hour. — *Dublin University Magazine.*

From the Reader.

PROSE TUPPER.

Critical Essays of a Country Parson. By the Author of "The Recreations of a Country Parson." (Longman & Co.)

To each age, says the Koran, is given its own poet, speaking in its own tongue. We rejoice in our Tupper, the laureate of commonplaces. He sings platitudes in verse, and A. K. H. B. in prose; so that we are better off than the Koran contemplated. Both are great in the different ways of quiet imbecility. Tupper is flowery and tinselly, A. K. H. B. plain and simple. In fact, Tupper is the butterfly, and A. K. H. B. the grub. Comparisons should not be instituted lightly between great men; and it is quite worth while to see by what process the prosaic grub becomes changed into the beautiful but rather artificial butterfly. Nothing can be simpler. For instance, here is a piece of wisdom from A. K. H. B.: "No private ground of offence should make you rejoice that your fellow-creature was hanged." ("Recreations of a Country Parson," p. 93.) This is the rough thought in its chrysalis state. But behold the change. In Tupper it would expand into something of this sort:—

Rejoice neither at the hanging of a man; for the hemp may be growing for you:
Jack Ketch is a long lane; and lo! he sometimes cometh in the dark.

This would be the Tupperian style, as near as we can approach to Tupperian art. Under its treatment the baldness entirely disappears, and is replaced by an affectation of sense. Again, in his own plain simple way, A. K. H. B. writes: "It is good occasionally to rise at five on a December morning, that you may feel how much you are indebted to some who do for your sake all the winter through." (As before, p. 243.) This sublime truth may be easily rendered into Tupperies in some such fashion as the following:—

Pleasant indeed is sleep; but damp sheets always give me a cold:
Dreams are a caution; but rising at five enlargeth the heart.

Or, to take another example of A. K. H. B.'s aphoristic wisdom: "It is better to be the warm, trembling, foreboding human being than to be Ben Nevis, knowing nothing, feeling nothing, fearing nothing, cold and lifeless." (As before, p. 268.) The analogous Tupperism for this would naturally be:—

Better a fool than a clod, and better a clod than a stone;
Better a mouse than a mountain, even though it be christened Ben.

Here our comparison between these two writers must cease. We simply wish to indicate the general position in literature which A. K. H. B. rightfully holds by his former productions. Tupper, however, it must be allowed, enjoyed a considerable advantage over his rival. Nobody expects actual meaning in verse, but prose must now and then have some lucid intervals. Throughout most of his volumes, A. K. H. B., however, has fully reached the Tupperian standard of imbecility. Of his various essays we will only say that their style is egotistical, their religion evangelical, and their humour Scotch, which means that they have neither religion nor humour. They are generally headed "Concerning," and the heaviest ones are called "Graver." Here and there italics and capital letters stand as substitutes for ideas. In short, A. K. H. B. has nothing to say, and he says it very badly.

In the volume, however, before us, A. K. H. B. is in the position of Juvenal's Codrus. He formerly had nothing, but now he has even lost that nothing.

Nil habuit Codrus: quis enim negat? et tamen illud
Perdidit infelix totum nihil.

After this, the wonder is how Codrus existed. And the modern wonder is how A. K. H. B.'s books exist. But just as the brain may be removed from a tortoise, and the animal will still live, so too, without brains, will certain books live. The arts of the publisher and the circulating library keep them in motion. Their life, however, is purely mechanical, and consists in being lifted from shelf to shelf. How far A. K. H. B. is fitted for the office of a critic, his own words shall testify:—

"For myself, I confess with shame—and I know the reason is in myself—I cannot for my life see anything to admire in the writings of Mr. Carlyle. His style, both of thought and language, is to me insufferably irritating. I tried to read the 'Sartor Resartus,' and could not do it. So, if all people who have learned to read English were like me, Mr. Carlyle would have no readers. Happily, the majority in most cases possesses the normal taste. At least, there is no further appeal than to the deliberate judgment of the majority of educated men. I confess further, that I would rather read Mr. Helps than Milton. I do not say that I think Mr. Helps the greater man, but I feel that he suits

me better. I value the 'Autocrat of the Breakfast Table' more highly than all the writings of Shelley put together." ("Leisure Hours in Town," pp. 174, 175.)

Here, according to A. K. H. B.'s own showing, are whole fields of literature into which he is unable to enter; here are thoughts, which are fast altering the whole order of things, which he owns that he cannot understand. What right, therefore, has he to come forward as a critic? Upon what ground can his judgment stand? Is the man who cannot appreciate Carlyle, Milton, and Shelley, likely to be just in his verdicts? What can he know of either spiritualism or humour who cannot read the "Sartor Resartus;" what even of prose who lowers Milton to Mr. Helps's level; and what of poetry who sneers at Shelley? Again, take the following simple-minded confession:—

"In literature, unlike law, a man frequently begins by judging others before he tries to do anything for himself. He begins by being a judge; and, if he is tolerably successful as a judge, he is advanced (so to speak) to practise at the bar. A young and inexperienced writer in a magazine is, for the most part, set to review books written generally by much older and wiser men than himself. If he do this tolerably well, he is, by-and-by, advanced to the writing of original articles. It was so with me." (Preface to the "Critical Essays.")

This is indeed the bane and curse of literature at the present day, that young and inexperienced writers are allowed to sit in

judgment on their betters, and to write on subjects which they have not studied. We will take leave to observe that the requirements of a critic are at the least wide culture, an acquaintance with books and men, and an independence of mind, and not apparently a total ignorance of all things under the sun. After this declaration of A. K. H. B.'s we are prepared for any thing, even for the insinuation that Archbishop Whately nearest of all men resembled Bacon in his mental characteristics. The Essays themselves we shall not take the trouble to review. We might as well criticise so much penny-a-lining. To one thing only will we call attention, the increasing tone of vulgarity in our literature. In every direction does it spread. It infests our periodical essays and poisons our novels. Thus A. K. H. B. writes: "The attendant placed above us a feather bed, cut out to fit about the head, and stretched no end of blankets over all." (P. 399.) Again, "by eight o'clock breakfast was on the table in the large hall, where it remained till half-past nine. Bread, milk, water, and stewed pippins (cold) formed the morning meal. And didn't we polish it off!" (P. 401.) The fault, however, is not here so conspicuous as in some of his previous volumes, where he actually thinks it decent to christen people with such a name as "Snooks." For this reason, we prefer these critical essays to their predecessors, but the highest praise we can give them is, that in these days of excitement and turmoil A. K. H. B. has kindly provided mankind with a new narcotic.

THE DEATH OF A BELIEVER.

THE Apostle slept; a light shone in the prison;

An angel touched his side:

"Arise," he said, and quickly he hath risen,
His fettered arms untied.

The watchers saw no light at midnight gleaming,—

They heard no sound of feet;

The gates fly open, and the saint still dreaming
Stands free upon the street.

So when the Christian's eyelid droops and closes

In Nature's parting strife,

A friendly angel stands where he reposes
To wake him up to life.

He gives a gentle blow, and so releases

The spirit from its clay;

From sin's temptations and from life's distresses
He bids it come away.

It rises up, and from its darksome mansion
It takes its silent flight,

And feels its freedom in the large expansion
Of heavenly air and light.

Behind, it hears Time's iron gates close faintly:

It is now far from them,
For it has reached the city of the saintly,
The new Jerusalem.

A voice is heard on earth of kinsfolk weeping

The loss of one they love;
But he is gone where the redeemed are keeping
A festival above.

The mourners throng the ways, and from the steeple

The funeral-bell tolls slow;
But on the golden streets the holy people
Are passing to and fro;

And saying as they meet, "Rejoice! another
Long-awaited-for is come;

The Saviour's heart is glad, a younger brother
Hath reached the Father's home!"

James D. Burns.

